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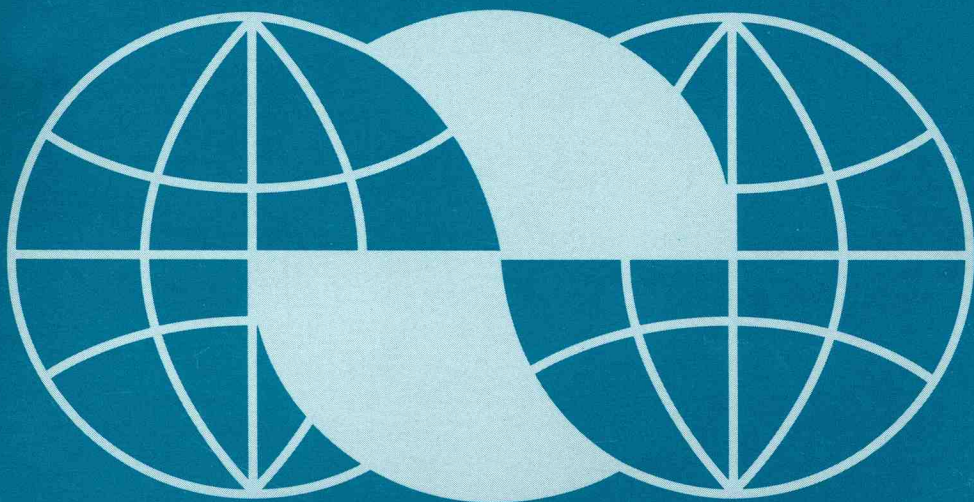


THE NORTH-SOUTH INSTITUTE
L'INSTITUT NORD-SUD

The future for women in development

Voices from the South

Proceedings of the Association for
Women in Development Colloquium





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October 19-20, 1990
Ottawa, Canada



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The North-South Institute

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Grants from many different sources supplemented the labour of many women. The Nordic countries, via AWID, provided the travel funds for developing country participants. The Ottawa Valley Chapter of the Society for International Development, via CIDA, covered speakers' honoraria and related expenses, while AWID funded the direct costs of the meeting. The International Development Research Centre provided their excellent conference facility.

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To the many people who generously provided ideas, time, energy and money, let me thank them now and hope the proceedings provide a living memory of what was begun in Ottawa in the chilly October of 1990.

Marcia M. Burdette
Director
Aid Effectiveness and
Development Cooperation
The North-South Institute

Introduction

The Association for Women in Development (AWID) is a U.S.-based professional association which focuses on international development and gender issues. Part of the association's mandate is to ensure "that women participate as full and active partners in a more equitable development process, and that they share in its benefits." Comprised of scholars, practitioners and policy makers, AWID sees itself as part of a global network that is concerned with the above-mentioned issues.

Every two years, AWID holds a major conference to examine a critical issue of importance to gender and development activities. In 1989, for instance, the conference focus was on the "Global Empowerment of Women." In alternate years, the association has organized colloquia that address more specific themes and which involve fewer participants. In 1989, AWID members expressed an interest in holding a colloquium with Canadians and participants from Nordic countries.

As a result AWID, together with the North-South Institute, MATCH International, and the Society for International Development (Ottawa Valley Chapter, Canada), agreed to host jointly the 1990 colloquium, "The Future for Women in Development." Participants from the South were invited to share their insights and perspectives about contemporary gender and development issues. To support this objective, the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) network played a major role in organizing the colloquium. Aside from suggesting panel participants from the South, DAWN mapped out the overall colloquium agenda. Based on the panelists selected and the topics to be examined, the next two days promised to elicit some exciting and ultimately crucial discussions about "The Future for Women in Development."

Goals of the Colloquium

The goals of the colloquium were threefold. First, as identified during the November 1989 AWID general conference, the colloquium was designed to encourage people from the developing world to discuss new Southern perspectives on the rapidly changing international environment for development. To facilitate this process, DAWN was

instrumental in setting an appropriate and timely agenda. At the suggestion of Peggy Antrobus, DAWN's current General Coordinator, three major issues were identified as crucial to the future success of women in development. Developed as a research strategy in response to accelerating global crises, these issues are: reproductive rights, the environment and economics. The colloquium itself was comprised of three panel discussions based on these research topics, and a summary on how DAWN approaches these topics.

The second goal of the colloquium was to examine ways in which the North can respond to some of the concerns expressed by women of the South. The audience participants included approximately 100 academics, policy makers, and practitioners from Canada, the United States and the Nordic countries. This well-informed audience discussed the papers and additional commentators from donor agencies responded to the issues raised. Clearly, in the context of a rapidly changing donor environment, the colloquium's theme, "Voices from the South," will benefit all concerned.

The third goal was to acknowledge the need for greater South-South collaboration. As such, the colloquium provided an opportunity for DAWN members to meet and address items on their own agenda. Indeed, the final panel, led by Peggy Antrobus, discussed some of the alternative frameworks proposed by DAWN as a response to the impact of global crises upon women in development.

Biographical notes

Dr. Bina Agarwal is currently a Fellow at the Bunting Institute (Radcliffe/Harvard University) and Professor of Agricultural Economics at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi University in India. Educated at the Universities of Cambridge and Delhi, she has been a Visiting Fellow at the Institute of Development Studies and a Research Fellow at the Science Policy Research Unit, both at the University of Sussex. She was also a member of a Commonwealth Expert Group on Structural Adjustment and Women. Active in the environment and women's movements in India, Dr. Agarwal is currently working on a book on gender and land rights in South Asia.

Dr. Krishna Ahooja-Patel, an expert in international law and women's development issues from India, has been appointed to Mount Saint Vincent University's Nancy Rowell Jackman Chair in Women's Studies. Dr. Ahooja-Patel has worked in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Ethiopia (1963) and for several years, she covered political and economic affairs for the *Political and Economic Weekly* and India Press Agency. In 1968, Dr. Ahooja-Patel started working for the International Labour Office (ILO) in Geneva and was senior research officer on women and development and editor of *Women at Work* during the United Nations Decade for Women. In 1986, Dr. Ahooja-Patel was appointed chief of the research and training unit at the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). She was INSTRAW's deputy director from 1986-89.

Ms. Peggy Antrobus is General Coordinator of the Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) network for 1990-94. As a founding member of DAWN in 1984, she helped prepare a platform paper, *Development, Crisis and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives* as well as organize a series of workshops of Feminism and Development at the NGO Forum in Nairobi. In 1979, Ms. Antrobus established the Women and Development Unit (WAND) within the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Ms. Antrobus has worked in various Caribbean countries with both government programs and non-governmental organizations at national and regional levels.

Ms. Maria Betania de Melo Avila is the Coordinator of the Study and Research Nucleus of SOS CORPO GRUPO DE SAUDE DA MULHER, a women's health group in Brazil. She was a member of the National Commission on the Study of Human Reproductive Rights and the National Council on Women's Rights. Since 1982, Ms. Avila has participated in many conferences and seminars on gender issues. Ms. Avila has done research on issues such as abortion, feminine sterilization, contraception, and types and quality of public health services for women. Publications include a coordinator's manual for family planning groups for Brazil's Ministry of Health and articles published by SOS CORPO.

Dr. Marcia Burdette is director, Aid Effectiveness and Development Cooperation at the North-South Institute, Ottawa, Canada. Prior to joining the Institute, Dr. Burdette worked as an academic in both U.S. and African universities and as a consultant. As a lecturer and senior research associate at the Universities of Zambia and Zimbabwe, respectively, she published extensively on the African economic experience, particularly on structural adjustment issues. Dr. Burdette is the author of *Zambia: Between Two Worlds* (1988), published by Westview Press, and numerous articles.

Dr. Alicia Pérez Duarte holds a doctorate degree in Law from the National Autonomous University of Mexico and is a full-time researcher at its Judicial Research Institute, as well as Academic Library Coordinator. She has written various articles on reproductive rights and other legal issues related to family, children and maternity in Mexico and Latin America.

Dr. Jane S. Jaquette is a professor of Political Science at Occidental College, Los Angeles, and the President of the Association for Women in Development. She has published a number of articles on women's political participation, women and development, and the politics of international feminism. Her most recent book is *The Women's Movement in Latin America: Feminism and the Transition to Democracy* (1989).

Dr. Bonnie Kettel is currently working at the Faculty of Environmental Studies in York University in Toronto, Canada teaching and supervising research on gender, environment and development issues. She also works as a consultant with the Canadian International Development Agency, training Tanzanian women on gender and development issues and Women in Development (WID) specialists from Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and Thailand. Dr. Kettel is Canadian Co-ordinator of the Women, Environment, Development Research Network (WEDNET). She works with the Environment Liaison Centre in Nairobi to collectively coordinate a large International Development Research Centre research initiative with African women researchers in various countries on "Women's Knowledge of Sustainable Resource Management in Africa."

Mrs. Adefolake Okediran is a lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of Ibadan in Lagos, Nigeria where she teaches Environmental Law. She has been involved in research and training on Gender and Environmental issues which include the Gender and Development course at St. Mary's University in Halifax and her work as World Bank consultant on the Status of Women, Law and Development in Nigeria. She is a member of DAWN (Africa) and the Women's Research and Documentation Centre (WORDOC) Institute of African Studies.

Dr. Adepeju A. Olukoya is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Child Health and Primary Care, College of Medicine of the University of Lagos, Nigeria. She has been working in female reproductive health since 1978. A member of many women's groups in Nigeria, she was recently the National Coordinator for the launching of the Nigerian Safemotherhood Initiative. She is currently the project director of a market-based health care service, including socio-legal counselling, sponsored by the Nigerian Association of University Women.

Dr. Patricia Stamp is an Associate Professor of Social Science at York University in Toronto. Affiliated with the Graduate Programmes in Social and Political Thought and Political Science, she has recently completed a term as coordinator of York's African Studies Programme. A founder of Women's Studies at York, she has taught and researched African gender issues for 16 years. As co-editor of the 1986 special issue of *Canadian Woman's Studies/les cahiers de la femme*, Dr. Stamp has been centrally involved in WID research design and critique for the past four years. Dr. Stamp obtained her Ph.D. from

London University in 1981 with a dissertation on municipal politics in Kenya. She has published a number of articles on Kenya and is currently working on a book entitled *Politics and Ideology in Kenya*. She is presently on the Board of AWID.

Ms. Zenebeworke Tadesse has been Editor and Director of Publications of the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Dakar, Senegal since 1987. She was the Executive Secretary of the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) from 1983 to 1986. She has also worked as a freelance consultant for UNESCO, FAO, UNRISD and the ILO. Ms. Tadesse's publications include a monograph published by the ILO on *Women and Rural Development in Africa: An Overview*; an article on "Women and Technology in Peripheral Countries" in *Scientific Technological Change and the Role of Women in Development* and an article on "Impact of Land Reform on Women in Ethiopia" in *The Sexual Division of Labour in Rural Societies*.

Ms. Nidhi Tandon is currently working as Programme Officer at the Overseas Development Institute in London, responsible for running a technical assistance program and conducting economic research on aid and investment in developing countries. As part of her work at ODI, Ms. Tandon participated in bringing together a number of economists who identified environment research gaps from a gender perspective. She was Project Officer in the Women and Development Programme of the Commonwealth Secretariat from 1985 to 1988.

Session 1

*Women
and
reproductive rights*

Dr. Alicia Pérez Duarte
Institute of Legal Research,
Autonomous National University of Mexico

Reproductive rights in Mexico

Summary

This paper examines how Mexico's legal system governs human sexuality and reproduction. The paper argues that, within such a system, there are contradictions which ultimately serve to undermine women's right to maintain control over their bodies. Through discussing national policies and laws which address the issue of human reproduction, it is evident that, in Mexico, reproductive rights do not correspond with human rights. Indeed, the paper emphasizes that, as yet, the definition of human rights has not given adequate consideration to the reproductive rights of individuals. In attempting to eradicate extreme poverty, the Mexican government has developed family-planning policies which are designed to prevent the poor from reproducing. At the same time, religious and political ideologies continue to encourage a population increase. The tensions arising between these two opposing constructs have had a detrimental impact, particularly where women are concerned. Essentially, population policies, as enforced by the Mexican legal system, are structured in such a way that women are regarded as little more than objects almost solely responsible for human, social and cultural reproduction.

Introduction

In theory, Mexico's jurisprudence and legal system are based on the principle of equality between men and women. This principle is securely enshrined in national legislation (such as our Federal Political Constitution and the Civil Code for the Federal District) and international legal instruments to which our country is a party (such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Sexual Discrimination). All this leads us to believe that there is political interest in changing the social

models of a stereotyped and discriminatory concept of women and their role in all areas of public and private life, including reproduction, birth control and motherhood. In Mexico, however, as in most Latin American countries, theory is divorced from reality and a wide gulf still exists between normative good intentions and proposed change. In our daily lives, the androcentric structures (to avoid calling them patriarchal¹) require women to fulfil certain stereotyped roles (mother, wife, daughter) in addition to their own interests and personal preferences. Because of their role in procreation, women are used as objects - and not subjects - of population, health and research policies. Traditionally seen as being responsible for children's education, women are used as pawns - and not individuals - in obtaining results in the areas of nutrition, education and migration, etc. Women are also considered second-class citizens in the labour market and viewed as individuals who can easily be threatened or subjected to pressure, through their children, when they do not agree to the conditions imposed by the male-father-husband during family conflicts. All this happens within this so-called egalitarian legal framework that justifies and supports it. Specific problems concerning the status of women, their sexuality and motherhood have not, however, been adequately addressed because hitherto the legal framework, in theory as well as in practice, has continued within the same functionalist, androcentric models.

These assertions might be refuted in an academic doctrinal discussion, but my aim during this meeting is to explain the Mexican legal system governing human sexuality and reproduction. I believe, in fact, that striking contradictions exist within this system, since some standards and policies comply with the issues and requirements imposed on our country by international organizations, others echo the pro-human rights tradition, while others respond to ideologies that are religious in nature, especially the Judeo-Christian tradition. Lastly, others are the result of specific action successfully taken by women's groups which the executive and legislative branches of government could not ignore. In order to highlight these

¹ I personally believe that the Mexican legal system is typically patriarchal because it encourages social structures within which, one way or another, men dominate women. From the problem of language use that ignores women, we move to other problems such as that of the potestative marital situation, which is sometimes disguised as an obligation to maintain the family and sometimes clearly stipulated to the point of blatant discrimination in employment-related matters or for access to certain management positions. It is, nevertheless, true that Mexico was one of the first countries to recognize the legal equality of men and women and to give women the right to vote.

contradictions, they must be discussed and confronted in forums like this one so that we can resolve the problem posed by such a heterogeneous framework when it comes to defining the legal concept that has been called 'reproductive rights'.

In order to do this, I will present a broad spectrum; at one end are the existing national policies concerning reproduction and at the other the laws applicable to it. At the same time, I will emphasize the question of human rights, the subject of this discussion.

Politics and reproduction

Mexico is a country whose dominant religious ideology has, since colonial times, been the Judeo-Christian tradition and specifically its Roman Catholic variant. This must always be borne in mind when considering subjects concerning the family, marriage and reproduction because it implies that for centuries the generally accepted principle was the biblical maxim, "go forth and multiply." Following our declaration of independence in 1821, after a war which left the population decimated and incapable of growth until well into the 1830s because of subsequent unrest, this idea was slowly transformed from a biblical expression into an imperative of the government: populate the country to guarantee our independence and national sovereignty. It was not until 1836, however, that the first General Law on Population was enacted, marking the beginning of policy definition designed to structure the population. It is true that demographers say we cannot talk about policy, since neither plans nor programs designed for this purpose existed. Nevertheless, the very existence of this law and another one in 1947 illustrates the Mexican government's continuing interest in regulating demographic change. These laws preserved the 'desire' to populate that had existed since colonial times, although there had been a clear division between the church and the secular state since 1856. This desire or intent is apparent in the encouragement of the formation of relationships at an early age, immigration, financial assistance and numerous family benefits as well as the banning (under the Health Code in force at the time) of any publicity promoting the use of contraceptives.

This pro-birth model underwent a change in the late 1950s when some private institutions set up the first family planning programs. The government, however, did not start to distance itself from this pro-birth orientation until the 1970s. The change was connected to

the national and international situation² and was given concrete expression when the General Law on Population was passed in 1974 and the National Family Planning Policy was introduced in 1977.

At this time, national population policies were based on four principles: integration in economic development, the right to responsible fatherhood, the protection of the family and the advancement of women. It was also at this time that the population, especially women, was literally bombarded with propaganda promoting the use of contraceptives, a practice, as I have already pointed out, that began in the 1960s primarily among women with an above-average education and their own economic resources.³ It was during this period, and we will return to this later, that the Constitution was amended to allow for the introduction of this ideological change and population policies. The present government, under President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, developed (based on national planning standards) the 1989-94 National Development Plan which contains a specific paragraph on population policy. The main focus in this paragraph is the prediction that by the year 2000 the population will have increased to a level where creating the necessary productive jobs and services will present a considerable challenge.⁴

This one statement shows us that, for those responsible for formulating Mexican government policy, the problem of development, extreme poverty and other similar matters can be resolved by the relatively simple expedient of a satisfactory population program, provided that this program is based on a decline in the rate of population growth. Overpopulation, according to the National Development Plan, is a problem of jobs and services and not one of natural resources.

According to the Plan, the main objective is to bring about a fall in the rate of population growth by encouraging reduced fertility while

² For further information on this subject, see the monograph issue of *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, no.1 (1990) which is entirely devoted to the subject of population policy and its effects. In particular, see the article by María Eugenia Zavala de Cosío, "Políticas de población en México," [Population policies in Mexico], *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, no.1 (January-May 1990), p. 15-32.

³ For further details about population trends during these periods and their impact on family structures, see Raul Benítez Zenteno, "Demographic transition: Population and family policy in Mexico" in the proceedings of the first seminar on the family, "New and old forms of reproduction in the Mexican family," Autonomous National University of Mexico, 1989.

⁴ *Federal Executive National Development Plan 1989-94* (Mexico City: 1989), p. 108.

intensifying the battle against infant mortality. This objective can be obtained through two types of action, both centering on education:

- Extending and intensifying the education of couples about family planning by providing sufficient, appropriate and accessible services.
- Encouraging structural changes that are linked to changes in the reproductive behaviour of couples. The following fact should be borne in mind: as educational and productive employment opportunities increase and become more equal between the sexes, the standard of living rises and this has an obvious demographic impact.⁵

All these actions stem from one aspect of the program: "To continue promoting reduced fertility by increasing appropriate, continuing education about population and family planning."⁶

This population policy is included in the National Accord on the Productive Improvement of the Standard of Living and is therefore closely linked to establishing social welfare in the terms expressed in the National Development Plan and also to eradicating extreme poverty.

I personally have the impression that our government wishes to eradicate extreme poverty by preventing the poor from reproducing. This impression arises from the actions of the health service, for example, the widespread implantation of interuterine devices without the express consent of patients or permanent sterilization, which is also used. Senior health service officials are of course completely unaware that these practices are taking place in health centres and hospitals for which they are responsible. Nevertheless, the testimony of some women who were sterilized without knowing it, and that of a social worker from the health service's Mexican Institute of Social Security provide proof of their existence.⁷

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108-109.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁷ Recently, during a seminar evaluating the status of women in Mexico from a legal perspective, at the Institute for Legal Research at the Autonomous National University of Mexico, Carmina Rivera presented a paper entitled, "Review of some of the social aspects of the care given to obstetric patients at the time of childbirth." She noted that implanting interuterine devices was a common practice as long as patients did not state their disagreement in writing. We discussed the validity of such a practice. Indeed, the value of a consent obtained in such circumstances (that is to say without sufficient information and at the moment of childbirth) is questionable. Similar testimony was heard during the Fourth National Meeting of the Mexican Demographic Society.

In 1989, the National Population Council announced the National Population Program for 1989-94 which begins with a general review of population policy and an analysis of the prevailing thrust of the programs up to that time. Such an analysis naturally considers programs on family planning and on the status of women.⁸

This program has five specific objectives aimed at fulfilling the general objective which is stated as follows:

- To help raise the welfare and quality of life of all Mexicans, by influencing population dynamics, structure and distribution, in a context that fully respects human rights and takes into account the characteristics of the social groups that make up the population and the specificity of each of the country's regions.⁹

This objective is questionable if the health service practices, to which I referred earlier, are considered. It does in fact seem to be more an attempt to garner popular support. One of the five specific objectives is related to reproductive rights. It reads as follows:

- To encourage a slower growth rate by reducing fertility, accompanied by an improvement in the welfare of the population with a concomitant increase in life expectancy. The stated aim of this objective is *to reduce the population growth rate to 1.8% in 1994 and to 1.5% in the year 2000.*¹⁰

A strategy, derived from the provisions of the National Development Plan (although the wording is slightly different) has been announced to achieve these objectives. It reads:

- To continue encouraging reduced fertility by increasing appropriate, on-going programs in education, population matters and family planning and by targeting them primarily at the most disadvantaged areas and social groups.¹¹

This program contains a sub-program dealing specifically with family planning. Its objective is:

⁸ Among the family-planning programs, we should mention the 1977 National Family Planning Policy and the 1989-94 National Family Planning Program. Among the programs concerning the status of women, we should mention the 1983-88 National Program for Integrating Women into Development as well as the recent establishment of the National Women's Commission and the 43 Commissions that exist in various federal and state public agencies.

⁹ National Population Council, *National Population Program for 1989-94*, Mexico, 1989, p. 47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

- To provide information and care to the family on the various factors that affect its size and welfare. For example, the optimum age for forming relationships, the number of children and spacing between them as well as reproductive health and the health of the mother and child.¹²

It proposes the following courses of action:

- To contribute to the population's change in attitude toward the appropriate age for forming relationships and the number of children and spacing between them.
- To help combine family planning services with those aimed at improving general health.
- To develop strategies to extend social security, to improve the quality of family planning services and to ensure their continued existence.
- To increase information and counselling services on human reproduction and the health of mother and child.
- To bring about a significant change in the attitude and participation of men in family planning.
- To carry out research and increase our knowledge about reproductive behaviour and the patterns of contraceptive use among participating groups as well as among those not yet included in these groups.
- To create a permanent system for evaluating family planning programs and their impact.¹³

The other specific sub-programs are family and population, participation of women, the indigenous population, education on population matters, communication about population matters, development of knowledge and information on population matters and strengthening the decentralization of demographic policy. Each of these programs involves at least one initiative affecting reproductive rights.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 49-50.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 49-50.

Human rights and reproduction

The legitimacy of the measures required to carry out these plans and programs is found within the Mexican legal framework, which must be studied in the context of international principles and of our own Constitution. Since we are trying to define reproductive rights, we must start with human rights which are linked to them. In my opinion, and given the lack of a precise definition, the concept with which we are dealing includes: the right to have control over one's own body, the right to health care, special care for mother and child and the right to found a family. Unfortunately, no international legal instrument exists which contains a list of comprehensive definitions of these rights. We must search through all the agreements, treaties and declarations. Articles 16 and 25 respectively of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights establish the right to marry and to found a family, the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to care and special assistance during motherhood and childhood. Article 10 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights holds the State responsible for giving mothers special protection before and after childbirth as well as for protecting and assisting children and young persons.

Article 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also recognizes the right to marry and to found a family. Articles VI and VII of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man establish the right to found a family, to its protection and to protection during motherhood and childhood, as do Articles 17 and 19 of the American Convention on Human Rights and Article 12 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. It is worth noting, however, that in the course of this research we failed to find any definition of reproductive rights or the right to have control over one's own body. In my opinion, this does not mean that such rights do not exist as human rights. A general concept merely needs to be proposed which defines and characterizes this right so that a supporting theoretical framework can be independently structured, as is the case with the others. This statement is based on the evolution of human rights and on the philosophical expression on which it is based. Specialized works on this subject contain a concept that describes these sort of rights as a set of human attributes and faculties, inherent in human nature, since they derive their justification from the human condition itself. These attributes and faculties have certain characteristics: they are imprescriptible, inalienable, universal, subjective, interdependent and complementary, and they cannot be renounced or violated.

It is in this sense that, besides being considered human attributes, the right to health care, to have control over one's own body and reproduction are interdependent and complementary to the right to life. When considered from the perspective of historical evolution, we see that the concept of human rights was originally a political concept that included respect for the liberty and autonomy of the individual on the part of the State. Later, when the individual became integrated in the State's political structure, the list of political rights appeared. Lastly, the concept of the welfare state emerged and with it came economic, social and cultural rights. This development left the doctrine and legal instruments with three types of human rights: civil, political and socio-cultural. Civil rights include the right to life and the right to found a family, from which stem the rights mentioned above.

In doctrinal studies on civil law, we find the concept of individual rights as basic rights for the legal individual. This concept undoubtedly includes both male and female individuals as well as legal entities. In a theoretical structure, however, some rights are specific to humans, namely, the right to life, to personal integrity (a right that includes the right to health care) and to have control over one's own body.

These factors should be sufficient to justify the existence of a universal right for men and women to decide freely about reproduction. However, we must be careful of the close link that exists between the right to found a family and the right to marry since it would, in fact, appear that one cannot exist without the other; this would impose serious restrictions on those who wish to marry and not have a family and vice versa. These restrictions might apply under certain circumstances, thus violating the free will of men and women.

Legislation respecting human reproduction in Mexico

In the specific case of Mexico, we must begin our research with a fundamental document: the Political Constitution of the Republic, Article 4 of which gives us our first introduction to what can be termed 'reproductive rights'. The second paragraph of this article states that "every person has the right to decide freely, in a responsible and informed manner, the number and spacing of their children." This article was substantially revised in 1974, in preparation for the International Women's Year celebrated in Mexico in 1975 and as a result of measures adopted during the 1974 Bucharest World Population Conference and the 1968 Teheran Conference on Demography.

I have already mentioned the impact population trends in the 1960s and 1970s had on the legal framework of our country; this was the first step toward subsequent change. The present Article 4, as well as the definition I mentioned above, has, since the reforms of 1974, established the right to the protection of health and the responsibility of parents to protect the right of their children to have their needs satisfied and their right to physical and mental health. Subsequently, Article 123, sub-paragraphs V and XV of paragraph A and XI clause C of paragraph B establish minimum standards of protection during pregnancy and nursing.

It is important to emphasize the link established by the Mexican Constitution between the concepts of motherhood, health, welfare and maternal and paternal responsibility. In my view, these concepts must be taken into account when defining reproductive rights. In addition, I think it important to point out that the right of every individual in Mexico to decide freely, in a responsible and informed manner, the number and spacing of their children must include the right to decide whether or not to have children, regardless of the limits fixed by Mexico's population policies.

Having made these comments, we can broaden our analysis to include secondary standards. We will begin with the General Law on Health, both parts of which were enacted soon after the constitutional reforms. The first statute expresses its objective as follows: "to regulate the phenomena which affect the numbers, structure, dynamics and distribution of the population within the borders of Mexico so as to achieve a just and equitable participation in the benefits of economic and social development" (Article 1r). To achieve this, the law gives the Ministry of the Interior power to take and implement all relevant measures, including the development of family-planning programs through education and public-health services (Article 3, sub-paragraph II). I wish to stress that this law clearly states that these programs must be carried out "with absolute respect for the rights of man" (which leads me to wonder: only of "man"?) and must preserve "the dignity of the family." Similarly, a National Population Council (CONAPO) was created and was given responsibility for national demographic planning (Article 5). In 1976, the Regulations under this law were enacted with the objective of establishing rules for implementing, among other things, the principles of the population policy and the activities of the National Population Council.

To this end, and germane to our topic, Chapter 2 establishes the rules of the population policy. Here, we find a link connecting this policy to the goal of improving the cultural, social and economic

conditions of the country (Article 5 of the Regulations) within a context that "respects the human rights, freedoms, guarantees, special characteristics and cultural values of the Mexican people" (Article 9 of the Regulations). The second section of this chapter is devoted to family planning, which is defined as a right in constitutional terms, with one rider: this right comprises obtaining specialized information and appropriate services (Article 18). It points out that family-planning programs are for information purposes only and should, therefore, provide specific information about their objectives, methods and consequences. It shall not in any way identify family-planning concepts for birth-control purposes or other systems that involve force or coercion, thus preventing the free exercise of the reproductive rights I mentioned earlier (Article 19 of the Regulations).

In my opinion, this represents one standard among many which defines a program that is far-reaching and full of good intentions but divorced from reality. In addition to the articles already quoted, I wish to mention another example, that of Article 22 which states that:

Family planning programs shall furnish clear and simple information about population trends and the relationship between the family and the general progress of development. They will educate individuals about legal means of controlling fertility. The responsibilities of couples and individuals when exercising their right to plan their families include taking into account the needs of their children, both living and unborn, as well as their joint responsibility with the other members of the community to improve prospects for the welfare and satisfaction in the fulfilment of their individual and collective objectives.

This is evidence of the government's effort to educate the people in a direction different to that of the pro-birth orientation of previous centuries and to accomplish this while respecting human rights. There is nevertheless a continuing tendency to yield to some extent to the deeply rooted Judeo-Christian tradition.

Article 227, sub-paragraphs IV and V of the General Law on Health, in the same constitutional vein as the concept of welfare, views mother and child care as well as family planning as basic health services. Later, in regulating these two services, the General Law on Health stresses their priority status. In terms of family planning, it reiterates that the services provided by the state are a way of exercising - while respecting human dignity - what we have called 'reproductive rights' (Article 67). Penalties were introduced for

performing sterilization procedures without the patient's consent or for exerting pressure to gain the woman's consent.¹⁴

Family-planning services comprise encouraging the development of educational communication programs on family-planning services and sex education based on curriculums and strategies developed by the National Population Council; providing care and supervision for users of family-planning services; acting as advisor on family-planning services in the public, social and private sectors and monitoring and evaluating their achievements in relation to the policies developed by the National Population Council; providing support and encouragement for research in the fields of birth control and sterility, family planning and human reproductive biology; participating in setting up mechanisms for determining, developing, acquiring, stocking and distributing medicines or other products intended for family-planning services; and compiling, systematizing and updating data needed to successfully continue existing services (Article 68 of the General Law on Health). The Ministry of Health thus defines in this way the basis for evaluating birth-control methods and their effect on health (Article 69 of the Law).

Another chapter, as a direct result of one of the courses of action listed above, establishes a legal framework for genetic engineering, including both bio-genetic experiments and conceptive technologies. Article 313 of the Law authorizes the use of organs, biological waste and corpses for therapeutic, teaching and research purposes and permits activities relating to the acquisition, preservation, use, preparation, administration and final destination (which could range from permanent preservation to destruction) of organs, biological waste and substances excreted or expelled by the human body during normal physiological processes (including the placenta and skin secretions) as well as human corpses including those of embryos and fetuses (Article 314 of the Law).

In another piece of legislation, this time the Civil Code of the Federal District, the second paragraph of Article 162 reiterates the reproductive rights enshrined in the Constitution since 1974, but adds that if a spouse is involved, this right must be exercised with the joint

¹⁴ I remember, however, statements in previous articles. This type of practice does go on in health centres but those in charge are not punished, since the authorities prefer to ignore them. When the practice is exposed, the reaction of incredulity serves as a substitute for action.

agreement of both parties.¹⁵ These are the standards that, in a consistent way, introduce a change in national behaviour. In light of how we have considered them, they represent a serious effort to support a population policy in line with international trends. These standards, however, exist concurrently with others dating from the first half of the century, a time when pro-birth ideas sustained by the ideological and religious tradition of Judeo-Christian culture still prevailed in the country and, as I have already mentioned, continued to exert a strong influence over it. Article 417 of the Civil Code dates from this time: as in many other similar codes, it stipulates that any condition prejudicial to the perpetuation of the species in marriage shall be considered null and void; this implies that a married woman or man cannot refrain from having children, even if they so wish. Moreover, either of them could take legal action to force the other partner to have children and this could lead to a divorce request on the grounds of contempt.

In my opinion, it is inconsistent that on the one hand, a right exists allowing individuals to decide freely in a responsible manner the number and spacing of their children - including the right not to have any - and that on the other, one partner in a marriage may not decide alone, since a negative decision could be considered contempt.

Even in the context of civil law, I should point out that no single standard exists responding to the new issue raised by the impact of conceptive technology. We are faced with a legislative vacuum that makes it difficult for women to have access to these new techniques and undermines the basic rights of the children born to these women.

In the same context, I must emphasize that as far as the Civil Code is concerned, sexuality and reproduction would appear to be closely linked by a cause-and-effect relationship. The legislative vacuum (to which I have alluded) and the institution of filiation, as it is structured in reality, reveal the legislator's lack of political will to move toward recognizing these obvious changes. Whereas in the past, mention of birth control was forbidden, today's taboos extend to genetic engineering and conceptive technologies and the old Roman Catholic principles on filiation still hold. All evidence to the contrary, motherhood in Mexico is still a reality and is an expected consequence of the marital relationship between husband and wife (Article 340 of the Civil Code). Where no marital relationship exists, motherhood

¹⁵ I would like to recall that in Mexico each state has its own Civil Code and these are sometimes different from the Civil Code of the Federal District; nevertheless, in the case of the subject we are dealing with here, the provisions expressed are repeated throughout the country, even in the states whose codes have been recently enacted.

can be traced to cases of kidnapping, depravity or rape when the time of the crime coincides with conception; the child is deemed to be the son or daughter of the presumed father while the mother and presumed father lived under the same roof as husband and wife; or the son or daughter has proof that the presumed father is also the biological father (Article 382 of the Civil Code).

In the current doctrinal discussion centering on truth and law, Mexico leans toward ignoring the biological truth, thereby exacerbating the old problem of establishing paternity and adding another in the shape of potential uncertainty about maternity. This discussion and its implications open up a whole new area which I do not want to pursue at the moment, but which must inevitably be considered when defining reproductive rights, since they do not include the rights of women and men who wish (or do not wish) to be mothers or fathers and those of the children born of these wishes.¹⁶

This look at the Mexican legal framework cannot be concluded without mentioning the laws governing abortion. The first of these can be found in Article 22 of the Civil Code and establishes legal protection for the unborn child. In accordance with this, because of an erroneous interpretation of the right to life, abortion is banned under the Criminal Code of the Federal District.¹⁷ Within the Federal District, a consenting woman who obtains an abortion as well as the person who performs it are subject to criminal prosecution, but as in all criminal matters, extenuating circumstances which exclude criminal liability exist.

Evaluation and conclusions

It is easy to see the difference between the standards existing prior to 1974 and those after 1974. Unfortunately, both types of standard are currently in force and are, generally speaking, observed. There are some obvious questions on this subject. They include abortion and

¹⁶ Little has been published on this subject in Latin America. What has been published tends to be rather conservative, invalidating to some extent any alternative to accepted structures. For example, Miguel Angel Soto Lamadrid, "Biogenética, Filiación y delito. Le fecundación artificial y la experimentación genética ante el derecho" [Biogenetics, filiation and crime. Artificial insemination and genetic engineering before the law] (Buenos Aires: Astrea, 1990).

¹⁷ Unlike civil legislation, all the Criminal Codes of the Mexican states are not similar to that of the Federal District, especially on the issue of abortion. In other states, such as Yucatan, an exclusion exists aimed at protecting the welfare of women and other children. For this reason, our comments apply to the Federal District only.

the right to decide the number and spacing of children; and abortion and the right to health care. In what way can the state protect the health of women who in desperation go to illegal clinics and risk death or serious infection because of the appalling conditions in which abortions are performed? How can we reconcile the health and welfare of women and children with unwanted pregnancies in conditions of extreme poverty? Why is all the propaganda on population matters aimed at birth control? Why is the life of the fetus protected while experiments on human embryos are allowed? Why do we talk about responsible motherhood and fatherhood while allowing donors taking part in conceptive technology practices to remain anonymous? Is the practice of birth control really concerned with a woman's right to health or does it have an exclusively demographic objective? Have women truly the right to control their own bodies or are they merely an 'object' of population policy? These questions represent only the tip of the iceberg, but they allow us to try to make an evaluation and thus arrive at some conclusions and recommendations.

The first conclusion that follows from all this is that the Mexican legislature's inaction has, in fact, favoured the existence of a contradiction within our legal system. This contradiction centres on reproductive rights, rights relating to conception and birth control, pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, nursing and the responsibilities of the mother and father. Given the patriarchal ideology which is dominant in my country, this area is the exclusive preserve of one sex; it is the woman who is responsible for human reproduction and for social and cultural reproduction.¹⁸

The concept of reproductive rights (from a feminist viewpoint of voluntary motherhood that encompasses sex education) in all its physiological, social and cultural aspects plays no part in this contradictory context. These aspects are: information about and voluntary access to sterilization and contraceptives; research on safe female contraceptives and contraceptives for men; the decriminalization and treatment of abortion as a public-health problem, and the demystification of motherhood as the sole expression of a woman's femininity.

Population policies and their legal framework are thus more than a positive practice allowing women to separate their sexuality from

¹⁸ According to Lorena Parada Ampudia, this is precisely one of the issues about which the Mexican feminist movement feels strongly. She asserts: "The duties relating to children should be assumed by men and society in general." Document presented to the Fourth Annual Meeting of the Mexican Demographic Society, April 1990.

motherhood and to exercise their right to control their own bodies. They are being turned into a practice that is forced, by a patriarchal system, upon the female population which is thus made responsible for fulfilling the objectives determined by the family-planning and birth-control policies and programs.

Survey findings about fertility and official census figures show the success of the policies and action taken since the 1970s in the areas of population, fertility and reproduction. There has, in fact, been a significant drop in population growth, and the number of women using contraceptives or who have been permanently sterilized is increasing. We have not yet, however, seen any real change in the status of women in Mexico, either in terms of the value placed on motherhood, on female labour or on women's role in society. An attempt to redefine the parameters is currently being made;¹⁹ it is, however, purely theoretical since the orientation of birth-control methods has made it impossible for new attitudes toward sexuality and reproduction to emerge. The number of permanent sterilizations is rising but forming relationships at a very early age and the spacing between births are not changing. There is such a strong desire to 'adjust' numbers to the objectives that the basic rights of women are being trampled.²⁰

From this point of view, the programs and legislation have been found wanting; the Mexican government must, therefore, once and for all adopt a consistent attitude with regard to reproduction and revamp its approach completely so that it respects the human rights of its people.

(Complete Spanish bibliography available on request from the North-South Institute).

¹⁹ Teresita de Barbieri discusses this theoretical trend in her article "Políticas de población de la mujer. Antecedentes para su estudio," [Women's population policies. Background to an analysis] *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, vol. XLV (January-March 1983).

²⁰ See María Eugenia Zavala de Cosío, "Políticas de población en México," [Population policies in Mexico] *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, no.1 (January-May 1990).

Presentation elaboration

In Mexico, stereotypes of women need to be examined, especially with regard to maternity. In daily life, patriarchal structures demand that women be mothers and daughters, used primarily as objects of society who are responsible for the education of children. Women are not seen as persons in their own right, but as secondary citizens on whom pressures can be exerted for the welfare of children. This concept of women is accepted within the existing legal framework.

In 1976, the first legislation on population was introduced as a means of regulating demographic change. The first aim of the population policy has been to create developmental infrastructures to sustain an appropriate population program. Such a program is designed to facilitate a reduction in the birth rate, in response to a shortage of employment and social services. Now, Mexicans are encouraged to decrease the birth rate and reduce child mortality.

The population policy is integrated into development schemes and social welfare improvements. The Mexican state wants to eradicate poverty by preventing the poor from reproducing. This initiative is visible in health-sector operations, particularly in cases of forced sterilization. The testimony of several women who have been sterilized against their will gives evidence to this type of exercise. This population policy was reviewed and now more emphasis is being given to family planning. Objectives are designed to pay attention to family issues and family resources as well as to the reproductive health of mothers. There is a need to change attitudes and strengthen interventions, to improve actions and continuity, and to give greater support to research efforts focusing on reproductive behaviour and the use of birth control.

The Mexican legal framework defines reproductive rights, but this framework needs to be examined in terms of larger human rights issues. We need to look at the right to establish a family. The laws determining human rights do not include all the subtleties involved; there are many rights which need to be more clearly defined. For instance, nowhere is it stated that one has the right to make decisions about the reproductive rights of one's own body. Even the United Nations framework on human rights is unclear. These rights are intrinsic to the nature of human beings and should be recognized as such.

In Mexico's legislation on population and reproductive choice is linked to the State's need to respond to the population's basic requirements. State structures for demographic planning establish population policies that are reflective of the economic needs of the population. The State is attempting to de-educate about pro-natalist policies but religious values still undermine this process. (Editor's note: pro-natalist, as used in the previous sentence, may be defined as pro-birth.) Nevertheless, community and sexual education is carried out by the National Council on Population and by private organizations. Research on birth control, sterility, and biology of human reproduction is underway and specific drugs and products are being distributed. Also, research on bio-technology is proceeding. All these activities are being carried out as a means of meeting the basic needs of the Mexican population.

The government has made a serious effort to introduce a policy which is in agreement with international trends, but pro-natalist approaches still have a strong influence. The civil code implies that men and women cannot abstain from having children, even if they wish to. One spouse can actually sue the other for refusing to have children. The civil code does not address this issue; indeed, there is a legislative vacuum. As a result, substantive changes are not forthcoming although in practice things have changed drastically.

Abortion is another problematic area. Prohibition of abortion in the federal penal code means that women who have abortions can be criminally punished, except under very special circumstances. This legislation raises many important questions. For instance, to what degree can the state protect the health of women when abortion is illegal and carried out in deplorable conditions? How can the health of women be reconciled? Does birth-control practice really deal with the health of women or is it used simply as a means to control the population?

Some conclusions can be made. A general lack of action has favoured an emerging contradiction about the rights of reproduction. Under patriarchal ideology, the concept of reproductive rights does not come into account. Research on non-dangerous contraception and protection of women's own choice and health is not a priority. The population policies and legal framework supporting these policies are becoming an imposed practice based on a patriarchal system.

Maria Betania de Melo Avila
SOS-Corpo, Brazil
Discussant

I think I must make some general and specific comments. I would like to share my perspectives as both an academic and an activist.

The concept of reproductive rights is important because it brings to the forefront the issue of women not having control over their own bodies. The actual concept of 'reproductive rights' takes 'conception and contraception concerns' out of the technical field and inserts them in a political perspective of citizenship and democracy. This political response is reflected in pedagogical activities and methodologies as well.

In Brazil, there is also a large gap between legal constructs and the reality of the social/gender situation. In 1988, a new constitution catalyzed women's struggles for reproductive rights. There is now the right to choose, but there is also the struggle against patriarchal family structures. For example, in constitutional terms, it is no longer the rule that only men be considered as the household head. Men and women are equally responsible for their households. The Brazilian government has accepted that, as a legal principle, people have the right to decide whether or not to have a family. But in reality things have not changed. The State had been pro-natalist until 1974, but private agencies have had family-planning programs since 1965. Essentially, these programs have focused on population control as opposed to the reproductive rights of women.

There is a real limitation on the technology available to women. There have been many problems concerning sterilization as a method of birth control, because it is so simple to promote and use. It has been consolidated as the primary means of birth control, in both rural and metropolitan areas. Reality is divorced from the public-policy aspects. Women often choose sterilization because they are tired of the burden of other methods; sterilization is often regarded as a relief. They have limited awareness of their fuller reproductive rights and the fact that they should have wider access to other methods. In Brazil, the sterilization of women is the prime mode of birth control, followed by the pill. At present, of those using birth control, 32 percent have chosen sterilization.

There is a need to make explicit links between reproductive rights and gender oppression. For example, abortion is illegal but widely used by women because of limited choices. Some people say that over four million women have abortions every year, others estimate this

figure to be 10 million. Rich women have access to private clinics; poor women are subjected to unsafe procedures which have serious side-effects and can cause death; mortality rates are high among women in Brazil who have abortions. Clandestine abortions have serious consequences socially: women are the ones who are morally responsible if anything terrible happens, while abortionists are usually not given any responsibility. Abortionists also charge high prices and can make a lot of money off poor women. Aside from being held individually responsible, psychologically, this situation takes a terrible toll on women.

Women's groups focusing on health and reproductive rights now provide counselling services although they cannot provide abortions. They are trying to lobby for change. This involves direct conflict with the church hierarchy. Furthermore, the hypocrisy of the situation is very strong: the State espouses motherhood and natality, but does little to support concretely women in their lives and struggles with reproduction.

Dr. Adepeju A. Olukoya
University of Lagos, Nigeria
Discussant

There is clearly much ambiguity between most of the law and reality in our countries. In Nigeria, we have had independence since 1960. However, for most of the last 20 years we have been under military rule. Furthermore, there is a strong Islamic influence, especially in the north, which greatly affects the political situation of the country.

Officially, the government has emphasized equal rights for males and females. But, under the same constitution, there are laws that make it impossible for women to own property and, indirectly, to determine their own fertility. If a woman does not have access to land, she will try to have a son so that she can gain access through him; these things influence how women view their fertility. The national population policy, which was inaugurated two years ago, recommended that girls should not be married below the age of 18 years. But, in actual terms, there is no law governing minimum age at marriage. The same policy espouses universal access to family planning, but in practice this does not happen.

Women may be part of the problem themselves. They do not exercise their political power in support of other women or to change the inimical situation of women. The socialization process of female children also brainwashes them. Young girls are influenced to believe

that they are second-class citizens. Women in southern Nigeria are economically liberated, but their willingness to address social issues is questionable. In school we see that girls do very well, but when it comes to areas that require girls to stand up for their rights, they back down.

Nigeria also has a very high maternal mortality rate, despite being one of the richest countries in Africa. One reason is that girls are given away very early in marriage, often before they have begun menarche. One of the biggest factors contributing to maternal mortality is obstructed labour, brought about by early marriages and childbirth at a very young age. If men were educated, they might begin to realize the consequences of this. Some cultural practices also enforce isolation for women during labour, so that access to health care is limited and serious health and life consequences result. Furthermore, the health-care delivery system is not organized enough to take care of these women.

There are social pressures on women to reproduce, contradicted by a lack of care for women who are reproducing. Women are left responsible for socially sanctioned actions. In Nigeria, a Safe Motherhood initiative has been launched. As part of the preparations for this launching, a survey of women's own awareness and needs was carried out. Women's awareness of health and legal issues is rising. Women are beginning to see the issues as they should. For instance, some women felt that boys who make girls pregnant should be made to drop out of school like the girls. Often, the schools will not allow the girls to return. Another proposal is that if the military are receiving free medical care, pregnant women should also be receiving free medical care.

Finally, a note of caution. The improvement of women's reproductive rights must be seen within the entire social context of Africa. Women who have been socialized as 'inadequate beings' often do not see any obvious infringements on their rights. For instance, much attention is now being paid to the effects of vesico-vagina fistular (VVF), but little is being done with respect to women's human rights. Women may not identify their rights as being intrinsically infringed upon and must be encouraged to develop their analysis.

Discussion

Three major themes emerged in the discussion following this presentation: the gap apparent between reproductive legislation and actual practice and/or change; the economics of reproductive rights; and the global politics of population with respect to recognizing a distinction between reproductive rights and reproductive demands.

Françoise Lieberherr, Swiss Development Cooperation, Switzerland: I was invited to listen and to learn and now I am happy to ask three questions. First, I would like to underscore and emphasize that your perspective allows us to put things in perspective from the North. All of you spoke of the distance between the legislation and the political will to change reproduction on the one hand and, on the other hand, the backwardness of behaviour that conflicts with this perspective. How can we deal with this gap and how long does it take for such models to change? The second question is: what are the models and behaviours of youth? Finally, the third question: because of these new models, do women and men progress at the same rate or is there a difference between men and women?

Olukoya: Concerning the time that it takes to change, I think it depends on the situation. Ten years ago family planning was not spoken about very often; now the government is really encouraging people to talk about it. Change depends on prevailing variables, and one important factor has been the economic situation.

Concerning youth, Nigeria has a big problem with adolescent fertility. Many abortions are carried out on young women. There is also the problem of cultural transition. Families are no longer in control of socialization, and young people are experimenting and getting into trouble. Age-old cultural controls which used to exist are breaking down and young people are being left alone.

Concerning male/female progress, do you mean toward socio-economic equality? In our case it is not happening at all.

Alicia Pérez Duarte: In the case of Mexico, it is a country of contrasts. We share the problems of women as experienced in all Southern countries, but Mexico was one of the first to grant women the right to vote. Nonetheless, due to fundamental traditions, little has changed. We have been granted equality, but the reality has remained the same.

It is difficult to answer questions such as the ones you ask because Mexico City is different from other parts of the country. In Mexico City, young women are better off but they still do not have much in the way of reproductive rights. In other parts of the country, women marry when they are young. When they come to child-bearing age and go to the hospital, they are often sterilized without knowing it. Many women have contributed to family planning, but not consciously or willingly.

Another question, concerning the advancement of men and women: all positive change has been due to the women's movement - they fought for change. We have had a change concerning rape victims, but other changes are at the stage of hope at the present time.

Avila: Changes have been largely symbolic in Brazil. Women are still seen as subjects, and the attitude of the government has enforced this. However, symbols are very important in changing reality. A key factor working against the possibility of changing our social reality is the long period of military dictatorship and, only recently, open elections. The role of women in fighting for the democratization of Brazil has been on a general front, even with respect to specific issues. Hence, women are now being seen as a political force on their own.

Rosemary Brown, MATCH International, Canada: I do not think we can look at reproductive rights in isolation. Although we will be examining economic issues tomorrow, I think it is important to keep an economic perspective on this discussion.

Avila: Women in Brazil have incorporated the idea about not having too many children. However, the decline in fertility has not encouraged or corresponded with a better model of development. Brazil has one of the highest rates of fertility decline in the world. Such decline is linked to many factors, namely the media, urbanization, cultural patterns, the entrance of women into the formal labour market, and so on. But one thing is true: Brazilian women are using contraceptive technology. Unfortunately, the most common form, sterilization, is irreversible. We must ask what price Brazilian women are having to pay by making the decision to not have children.

Brazil has one of the highest concentrations of income in the upper classes. Consequently, fertility decline among poorer women does not benefit them because resources are still declining, and their concrete economic marginalization is a reality. The problem of street children, millions of them, is one aspect of this. Some talk of 30 million children living on the street, without education or a home. Therefore,

in this context, there is a limited correspondence between economic success and women's reproductive choices.

Olukoya: In Nigeria, the total fertility rate is not declining, and the economic situation is worsening because of the debt burden. The old assumption of large families due to rural demands is no longer tenable. People are afraid to have large families due to the debt situation, not as a result of social or cultural factors. We still have a lot of children who are very poorly fed and we have a problem with street children. Their abuse is also a problem.

Pérez Duarte: This same problem is occurring in Mexico. Studies have shown that official figures are not reliable. Officially, decline in birthrate has been a success, but actually this is not true. Official figures say that women do not have as many children and that their economic situation is better - this only affects a small minority of women. Other women in city slums and rural areas have a different situation. This is the same as Brazil. I have studies on reproduction and fertility in Mexico that criticize the government figures. I can distribute copies of this information.

Krishna Ahooja-Patel, Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada: My question has to do with the global politics of population. How many countries have implemented population policies which truly recognize reproductive rights? Lack of control by women of their bodies is still a key question! We should make a distinction between the control women have over their bodies and the control exercised by the Church, the State and male members of the family. So really, what we are talking about are demands, not rights, that women are making to be transformed into rights. This distinction is important in terms of political and legislative processes. Universal human rights separate women's rights with respect to their enforcement and implementation. Women's rights are not yet an integral part of 'human rights'.

What I am really trying to say is that women in the North and South should talk about convergence of interests. How is it that abortion and reproductive rights get the same kind of reaction in all our countries, both developed and developing? Why is it that the right to have an abortion has become a political issue? These questions take us back to the global politics of population.

One important link that is missing is the consideration of economic and demographic policies. Why is it that some countries have incentives to decrease the population and other countries offer disincentives?

Pérez Duarte: The politics of reproductive reform in Mexico and other countries have been complex. Pro-natalist policies have led to high population growth rates that continue in spite of official statistics. We can talk of reproductive rights but demands have to be put down on paper. The appropriate regulation of reproductive rights will be found through the action of women, not through laws and policies. What is important is how women decide to handle this issue.

Session 2

*Roundtable on
environment
and gender*

Dr. Bina Agarwal
Bunting Institute, Radcliffe College, U.S.
and Delhi University, India

Gender and environment in India

Summary

Recently, the topic of 'gender and the environment' has arrived at the forefront of gender and development concerns and research activities. The continuing increase in environmental degradation coupled with, and significantly related to, the inimical situation of women underlines the importance of this issue. Therefore, in recognizing gender and the environment as a most pressing and timely concern, this session proceeded as a roundtable discussion. Although the session focused largely on the examination of gender and the environment in India, as presented by Dr. Bina Agarwal, the roundtable format facilitated an open and stimulating discussion.

Introduction

Academic analyses are just beginning to grapple with the complexities involved in issues about gender and the environment. The main question that needs to be asked is why do we need to examine the issue of gender in relation to the environment? Is there a distinct relationship between women and the environment? Women do bring a perspective on the question of environmental regeneration. Perhaps we need to think of women as actors.

I will introduce the background situation. India is marked by a deteriorating environment: deforestation is affecting 1.3 million hectares of land a year. If you look at the village common lands, which are critical for fuel resources, forests have declined by 30 to 60 percent. For India as a whole, 57 percent of the country's resources are depleting. By all counts, there is a major environmental crisis taking place. At the purely macro level, we know that soil erosion can cause landslides and other disasters. However, when we look at the micro implications, and the impact on people, we find the most dramatic

effects. There is a class specificity and location specificity involved. Traditionally, the forests have provided, and continue to provide, food and shelter, especially for the poor. Many of these products are essential for survival during critical times. When it comes to food, fuel and shelter, much is gathered as opposed to being purchased. When we look at poor households, we see why gender becomes important.

A gender component becomes apparent because of gender-differential use of resources. Factors of inequality include:

- the sexual division of labour;
- gender inequalities in the distribution of available family resources;
- unequal ownership endowments and exchange entitlements; and
- poor access to income-earning opportunities.

The effects of such inequalities are many. For instance, women's time is affected in that it takes increasingly longer to collect resources. In one study it was found that, in 1972 in Bihar, women had to walk 2 kilometres to reach the forests. By 1983 they had to walk 8 to 10 kilometres. When women are not able to collect enough firewood, there are nutritional implications as well. With an increased amount of time spent searching for firewood, there is less time for food production. Shortages of fuel can therefore affect malnutrition just as much as shortages of food. There is an impact on family health as well. Knowledge about medicinal and herbal practices are lost. Finally, there are the indirect effects, such as migration and increased mortality. Essentially, the impact of environmental degradation affects everyday survival techniques.

What are some of the causes?

Statization of forests: State takeover of forests started during the colonial era. For instance, under colonial rule there was large-scale cutting of oak trees. These policies have continued and have come to erode local management of forests. The most tragic issue is the marginalization and destruction of what were environmentally sound practices. The link between local resource management and resource use was broken through State intervention.

Privatization of common lands: Land distribution schemes often privatize public and collective resources. Regarded as the "tragedy of the commons," much of this land was supposed to be given to the

poor. In actuality, however, only 14 percent went to the poor with the remaining 86 percent going to the rich.

Non-sustainable commercial exploitation: Irrigation dams and larger systems of agricultural development have affected the complementarity between common lands and resource use. Large agricultural projects have encroached on the forests.

International factors: There has been a large export of forest resources corresponding to an increase in technology imports. Many of the technological innovations affecting agriculture do not respond to local needs. Consumption patterns in the West also contribute to the depletion of forest resources in India.

Population growth: Population growth is mediated by many factors. High levels of land degradation affect marriage and education patterns for women which, in turn, have long-term implications for women's fertility. These linkages are very complicated and need to be explored.

The response of women

The poor and women have been victims, but they have not been passive. The State has tried to promote reforestation mainly for commercial uses. Most success stories relate to people's own actions. For example, the Chipko movement in northern India involved women at the community level. People resisted a tree-cutting project and women were key actors. Women have not only protested against commercial exploitation but also have resisted projects beneficial to men only. Examples like this highlight gender-interest conflicts and choices between forest protection and development. Women and men often choose to develop different trees and resources, based on their specific perspective and needs. Women have articulated most forcefully a holistic understanding of the environment - seeing the forests and the environment in a new light, different from foresters. Awareness of an integrated ecosystem lies at the heart of this movement.

There are two significant policy conclusions arising from this response: policies that protect forests need to be part of anti-poverty programs; and to increase efficiency, women need to be part of the project process.

Women's environmental movements have risen in tribal areas and communities where women have been recognized as a very significant part of agricultural production. The perspective in these areas is different from eco-feminist movements in the West because

women in the West are not as biologically close to nature or as predisposed to such relational concerns. These attitudes are based on the material reality of women and their use of resources. So the gender division of labour can be critiqued in terms of de-classing and de-gendering the world division of labour and resources.

Issues of the environment offer new insights into the process of change and development, especially in terms of control of resources and information. Women's political participation is vital.

Adefolake Okediran
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Discussant

In Africa, the question is to hold on to what we have, to hold on to basic survival strategies. Women's needs are implicated vitally in this process.

The focus of this discussion is on agriculture, environment and women in Nigeria. For various reasons, traditional farming systems of bush/fallow cannot cope with current population and social needs. Lands have been exhausted and community lands have been over-used due to land shortage, leading to desertification. This problem is spreading, especially in the northern part of the country. Urgent action is needed here.

Massive rural-to-urban migration for many Nigerians has meant a saturation of current water and drainage systems in some areas. In the east, erosion has become a major problem due to inadequate development and rural planning for land. Fuelwood consumption for women is another major issue: people have been calling for a change in patterns, but there are no affordable alternatives to the current fuelwood crisis. The average woman cannot afford a kerosene stove and is forced to use fuelwood. Indigenous knowledge systems need to be researched more, in order to understand processes by which women survived before. There might be lessons to be learned from these strategies. Traditional taboos may aid environmental protection. With the assistance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), action-oriented research could be developed to communicate environmental awareness and gather new data on women.

Action groups working in the area of re-forestation, soil stabilization, and water supply and sanitation are possibilities for further research efforts. There is a need for community participation through local environmental action plans, to alert communities and

families to environmental costs. The issue of toxic substances is a growing problem: there is a need to combat the dumping of waste from other countries into Nigeria. A recent case alerted and sensitized the whole country to this danger. Many African countries are receiving these substances without being aware of the implications. Clearly, more action and education is needed. There is a need in Nigeria for research on trans-boundary pollution through toxic wastes.

Women in the informal or petty-trading sector are still invisible in spite of the work they do in selling, construction, and so on. Due to their participation in this sector, for instance, as they move around and work in food-selling, women are often implicated in the spread of communicable diseases.

Dr. Bonnie Kettel
York University
WEDNET Coordinator, Canada
Discussant

The women and environment critique needs to challenge global and regional policies that have emphasized men's and capitalist's interests. We need to begin by recognizing that women are the primary users of the world's resources. It is easy to assume that women create the problem of environmental degradation. Since we lack a body of research on women's use of natural resources, we can easily conclude that women in the Third World are in need of environmental education. The arrogance behind this assumption is really quite profound. It is not enough to look at women's roles; we must also come to terms with the issue of gender and people's ways of understanding the environment.

Human beings conceptualize everything. In this sense there are no natural resources at all. This is a culturally encoded concept. It is not just that we see the world in ways which affect women and men differently. Myths are developed that we carry into our work. One of the first things that we assume is that people who have simple technologies see the world in a simplistic way. However, their understanding of the world may, in fact, be quite complex. We understand that tasks and responsibilities may be encoded by gender; we do not understand that our vision of the natural world may also be so encoded.

Now what about ourselves? As people who live in the urban West we need to understand that our landscapes shape our cultural

interpretation of what landscape even is. Our landscapes are profoundly gender-dichotomized and heavily techno-oriented. These myths have been worked out on women in developing countries. Our landscapes become reified and are applied wholesale on other landscapes. We tend to see men, by nature of their gender, as being in charge and as the ones who need to be handled. Women acquire a new invisibility within this model. They are regarded as another natural resource rather than the person with whom one must deal. We need to consider our own landscapes and how our arrogance in handling these landscapes has affected gender and environment concerns. How do we begin to work through these assumptions? We have to do so by leaving behind our own landscapes and by working with women and men with respect to the way they see their landscapes.

We need to be careful about developing an eco-feminist perspective. I am not very charitable about its development. The eco-feminist argument is that women are biologically more in tune with nature than men. Eco-feminism is also a gender construct shaped by our understanding of men, women and nature. This construct is part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Nidhi Tandon

Overseas Development Institute, U.K.

Discussant

The influence of the consumer society and what follows from it, the ideology of consumption, is a core problem that can be extended to the ethos of economics, as a growth-oriented and export-oriented thrust. The problem with gender issues is that they are divorced from the broader contexts within which they are situated, even in terms of the environment. And is it possible to consider gender and environment issues in purely economic terms?

Research should consider two main targets: to introduce new perspectives and to modify current research efforts being carried out in the traditional mould. With regard to the latter point, there is so much research going on it is frightening in terms of its scope and impact. In September 1989, for example, a conference held in Tokyo on "Global environment and human response toward sustainable development" completely missed identifying the gender dimensions. Such research is gender-blind, paternalistic, and donor-biased. This style of economic research is looking at fiscal models and growth-oriented economic plans, influenced by bilateral and

transnational power bases. Structural adjustment with a human face is not really being taken into account in current research.

However, alternative networks are rising. For example, the bio-mass users' network, based in Washington, D.C., is not gender-focused as yet, so more cross-germination of research must be done to increase this awareness. Economic research gaps are significant and need to be worked on via current research and networks. There is significant work happening at the micro- and macro-levels, but the two must be brought together.

Discussion

Three major themes emerged in the discussion following this presentation: development efforts and environmental costs, eco-feminism, and the response of women to environmental issues.

Rekha Mehra, ICRW, U.S.: I have a question about the agricultural development and research that was done, which contributed to vast food production in Asia. This was done at considerable cost to the environment, so should this have been done differently?

Agarwal: The question of the Green Revolution is a vital one. The answer is that agricultural development needs to be much more pluralistic in technology and must focus more on regional resources. In India, much of the resources utilized by the Green Revolution were identified by focusing on regions where high inputs were needed to maximize productivity. Other regions with high productivity potential were completely neglected.

With respect to the institutional aspect, there is a strong bias in terms of the gender distribution of resources. Often there is a contradictory effect on women's labour, with long-term implications. The question of costs must be refined and new alternatives found.

Kettel: I would like to respond to the question of eco-feminism. I say, please no. I think that eco-feminism as a response to this problem is somewhat idealistic. There is a romantic bubble that sees women as nice, warm people. We have, therefore, been assigned the task of taking care of the planet. We are already taking care of the world's children.

Marcia Burdette, The North-South Institute, Canada: We need to find some other examples of how women are organizing to respond to environmental issues at the local level in India and Nigeria.

OkeDIRAN: On the domestic sanitation scene, market women are as organized as environmental groups in the market places. They are in the forefront there but lacking in other areas. They need support and sensitization.

Agarwal: There are other examples besides the Chipko Movement which exist in pastoralist and tribal areas. Employment guarantee schemes provide stable work in drought situations. Due to State

control over community resources, there are strong constraints on the generation of community action. Decentralization would be an alternative, privatization should be avoided, re-communalization must be stressed. Another system for local participation in decision making would be full community democracy around key issues rather than representation which reinforces local inequalities.

Adepeju Olukoya: The need to import improvements to traditional sectors often influences women's own health and economic decisions, thereby producing dilemmas for women as to what development means. Each country must decide, what is development? Also, women are often 'helped' through labour-saving devices, but these devices may not be practical for village women in terms of cost to themselves and their environment.

Session 3

*Impact of the
economic situation
on development*

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CODESRIA, Senegal

Coping with change: An overview of women and the African economy

Summary

This paper emphasizes how, in Africa, macro-economic analyses and concomitant policies contain an implicit bias against women. The central focus of such work tends to rest on gross domestic product which, in itself, fails to acknowledge or value the contribution of women in reproduction and the maintenance of human resources. To exacerbate this lack of recognition, much of the current women in development (WID) literature provides a weak analysis of how to ameliorate women's economic situation. Many WID studies stress that if national development plans and activities were simply more aware of women's labour input, positive policy measures on behalf of women would result. The paper realizes, however, that from a macro-economic perspective, many complexities are involved.

Essentially, the impact of the African economic crisis has placed women in a particularly vulnerable position. While much of the development rhetoric is eager to mention and applaud women's contribution to the African economy, appropriate legislation and policy measures barely notice or support their efforts. Of particular concern are structural adjustment programs (SAP) which have produced severe increases in unemployment and underemployment. As a result, there has been a significant rise in informal-sector activities. As a means of survival, women's involvement in this sector is steadily taking precedence over their previous reproductive responsibilities. The consequence of this transformation has been detrimental for the well-being of society as a whole. Nevertheless, the increased autonomy gained from such income-earning activities has provided women with a new sense of confidence. In recognizing this new-found self-assurance, the paper concludes by expressing a hope that women will challenge the structures that have prevailed in oppressing them and which have served to undermine the African economy.

Introduction

What seemed as a fairly straightforward task when I agreed to write an overview of women and the African economy turned out to be a much more complex task when I actually started to write the paper. True to the tradition of women's work, I spend an inordinate amount of time but the outcome is at best meagre. The major difficulties were the phenomenal transformation of the African economy that is presently under way, the built-in conceptual bias of macroeconomic analysis and policy,¹ and the conceptual shortcomings of the literature of women in development (WID).²

Let me start out with the third difficulty, as it is related to one of the concerns of the conference, namely the future for women in development. In a recent article, Kandiyoti (1990) eloquently presents most of my concerns in her reviews of assumptions behind advocacy of direct assistance to rural women and evaluates resultant policies. She states, "there is a sense in which policy documents on assistance to rural women and broader rural development policies almost seem to emanate from different universes. The former use the language of 'basic needs' whereas the latter distinguish themselves by a strong market orientation. It is important to reflect the meaning of the disjuncture."³ Earlier, the major faulty assumption informing WID had been challenged by others.⁴

It is worth recalling that when WID research first emerged in the 1970s, there was a parallel debate challenging the mainstream developmentalist literature over and beyond the critiques of modernization theory. A case in point is dependency school. By the late 1970s, as the contemporary crises gathered momentum, the notion of 'development' was being challenged, reformulated and/or abandoned as its capacity to explain the existing reality became dubious. Toward the end of the 1980s, earlier reformulations such as sustained development gave way to sustainable growth⁵ and as

¹ These biases are spelt out in Elson (1989).

² See Staudt (1988) for a review of the literature.

³ Kandiyoti (1990), p. 13.

⁴ See Beneria and Sen (1981). See also *Development Dialogue* (1982), Special issue, "Another Development With Women," proceedings of a symposium devoted to this theme.

⁵ World Bank (1989).

structural adjustment took over the privileged place enjoyed by development, 'maldevelopment' has emerged as an all encompassing concept to describe all the past policy errors. In the meantime, "adjustment policy in the 1980s has really become development policy".⁶

Ironically, even as appeals to 'integrate women in development' persisted, the most telling critique against development came from the women and development literature.⁷ Yet, a disproportionate amount of WID literature appears oblivious to major shifts in theory, emergent schools of thought and mainstream policy directions with the exception of monitoring its rhetorical or symbolic inclusion or exclusion of women or broadly gender related issues. Just as emergent WID research worked within the modernization perspective long after that school of thought had been discredited, so does the most current WID research cling to the short-lived basic needs of the 1970s.⁸

Just as the wealth of data⁹ became available documenting women's incredible capacity to accommodate conflicting labour demands; the labour-intensive and wide range of activities they undertake to ensure the survival of their households; their potential as entrepreneurs and model farmers calling for equitable allocation of resources, global policy shifted toward a market orientation. Ironically, it was as if the avalanche of data served to convince the powers that be that Third World women's labour elasticity would ensure the success of the structural adjustment program (SAP). Far from being new or specific to current policies of structural adjustment, Elson argues, there is a built-in conceptual bias against women in macroeconomic trends and policies. She then traces both the explicit and implicit assumptions in forming macroeconomic policy formulations:

⁶ Jolly, Richard (1988) quoted in *Africa Recovery*, p. 26.

⁷ See Staudt (1988).

⁸ Kandiyoti (1990), p. 13.

⁹ To date the best synthesis of research on women and development as well as assumptions and implications of macroeconomic policy shifts and a pioneering work on the impact of structural adjustment on women is to be found in Sen and Grown (1987). A similar and recent approach is Elson (1989); and for country specific studies see Feldman (1989); Muntimba, D. (1989), Marshall (1990).

"macroeconomic trends and policies are usually presented in a language which appears to be gender neutral. No specific mention is made of gender or the sexual division of labour. The focus of attention is on the gross domestic productivity. Economic policies are supposed to reallocate resources so as to restore balance of payments equilibrium, increase exports and restore growth rates. However, this apparent gender neutrality masks a deeper general bias. There is a hidden agenda in the procedures of analysis and policy formulation. This hidden agenda covers the process of the reproduction and maintenance of human resources... By excluding explicit consideration of this work, and of the resources it requires, macroeconomic analysis and policy has a built-in conceptual bias against women."¹⁰

What is important is the practical consequences of such a conceptual bias. At a time such as the present conjuncture "when economic policies are formulated to reallocate resources, the lack of explicit consideration of the process of reproduction and maintenance tells against women." For macro-economic policy assumes implicitly that "this process which is performed unpaid by women will continue regardless of the way resources are reallocated. Women's unpaid labour is implicitly regarded as elastic, able to make up any shortfall in other resources available for reproduction and maintenance of human resources".¹¹

Ever since its inception, there is an implicit assumption in mainstream WID literature that if only donors and governments were convinced of the pivotal role women played in the economy and society, they would be willing to allocate resources to ameliorate the status of women. In order to sell this to policy makers, there has been a tendency to argue that, "significant improvement can be achieved with very meagre resources". In keeping with the earlier indicated notion of two different universes, "proposals for women's projects are oblivious of similar rural development projects geared to men and the lessons learned from their shortcomings. What is more "different and less stringent criteria are applied to women".¹²

¹⁰ Elson (1989), p. 57.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹² Sen and Grown (1987) have described at length some of the problems related to women's projects.

Yet another common approach to women's projects is the tendency to treat women "as an isolated group," and to avoid discussing "the relation between women and men in the household." Furthermore, numerous policy recommendations would indeed benefit women "were they to be introduced." However, "most of them require more resources to be directed to women, but there is no discussion of where these resources are to come from nor of the barriers which have prevented these policies, long advocated from being introduced in the past"¹³, and especially during this period of economic stagnation or decline.

In spite of these limitations, women's projects have had some valuable outcomes, and if nothing else, help us draw lessons for the future. Before ending this section, however, it should be noted that one of the most disturbing unintended outcomes of the humanitarian appeal for supplementary funding for women is the approach that conceives women as vulnerable and passive recipients of exogenously generated benevolence.¹⁴ What our own experience and the voluminous literature on women has taught us is to see women not as victims but as agents shaping and extending their own important though limited spheres.

Profile of the African economy

Historians will undoubtedly categorize the 1980s as one of the watersheds in African history. Africa is suffering the most intense economic crises. The nature and magnitude of the crisis varies from country to country. The major features of the crisis include drought, famine, desertification, ecological degradation, fiscal crisis, indebtedness and deteriorating terms of trade. Popularized by the media, the notion of crisis tends to denote a temporary but catastrophic event. It would seem a more rigorous and accurate approach to conceptualize crisis "as a turning point or period of transition".¹⁵ According to Elson's engaging analysis, while the mode of accumulation which prevailed from the early 1950s to the early 1970s with its high level of employment creation and rapid rates of growth of national income

¹³ Elson (1990), p. 11.

¹⁴ See for example Cornia, G., Jolly, R. and Stewart, F., eds., (1987). See also Elson (1990) who provides a very useful critique of the Notion of Adjustments with a Human Face.

¹⁵ Elson (1990), p. 1.

and international trade, both in the capitalist industrialized world has come to an end, "a new mode of capital accumulation which leads to a return to high and stable growth rates in the world capitalist economy is not yet in place. Hence, we are in the middle of a period of stagnation, instability and restructuring and "the incidence of crisis is uneven".¹⁶

The diverse economic and political realities captured by the notion of the African crisis both by the media and the numerous academic fora are not transient events, but symptoms of "significant changes in the structure of African economies".¹⁷ The indices of this macro-structural shift in the period between 1980-86 include marked decline in the relative importance of agriculture and industry and the increase in the share of the service sector of the economy. In per capita terms, agricultural output declined by 25 percent, industrial production by 27 percent and services by 18 percent. Meanwhile, African economies became less trade and export-oriented as evidenced by a significant reduction in exports and especially imports.¹⁸

These changes in the pattern of economic activities included adjustment in incomes of social groups, decline or collapse of much formal sector economic activity, expansion of the informal sector and diversification of the survival strategies of all wage earners skilled or unskilled, and both those in the formal and informal sectors. Finally, these trends toward informalization of the economy and society are precursors of major transformations in state society relations as evidenced by struggles for democratization.

Between 1980 and 1984, the gross domestic product (GDP) of African countries declined by an average of 1.4 percent a year, per capita GNP by an average of 4.4 percent a year, export volume by 7.4 percent and import volume by 5.9 percent per year. Since the first oil crisis of the early 1970s, African governments have been borrowing money to make up for the declining growth rates.

According to World Bank estimates, the total debt of sub-Saharan Africa increased from \$14.8 billion in 1974 to \$102 billion in 1986. Accordingly, the World Bank has recently designated 22 sub-Saharan African countries as 'debt-distressed', meaning that their projected ex-ante debt service ratio for 1988-1990 are more than 30 percent. For

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁷ Ghai and de Alcantra (1990), p. 395.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 395.

these 22 countries, per capita output fell by 16.6 percent between 1980 and 1986, per capita consumption declined by 12.4 percent, investment went down by 15.6 percent and export of goods dropped by 30.1 percent.¹⁹

At the end of 1987, Africa's total debt in absolute terms including arrears on payment due was about \$141 billion. Outstanding debt from the region as a whole is estimated at 375 percent of 1987 exports! Similarly in 1987, and in spite of rescheduling of the major part of the debt, the debt service due was about 50 percent of the value of the continent's exports. By 1988, Africa had the highest proportion of debt to GNP in the world at 55.1 percent.²⁰

This aggregate data conceals the fact that, in some countries, such as Sudan, the annual debt service repayment is equal to total foreign exchange earnings. It is reported that, even during the devastating famines of 1982-85, the Sudanese government continued to export sorghum, the staple food of the majority, in order to finance the mounting debt and to improve the balance of trade deficit.²¹

Simultaneous to the mounting debt servicing, Africa is faced with constantly deteriorating terms of trade. Between 1981 and 1986, there was an overall 40 percent worsening in the terms of trade. Hence since 1982, net capital outflows have exceeded net capital inflows. According to the United Nations, in 1986 commodity prices dropped to their lowest level in 30 years. This implied a decline in Africa's export earning from \$65 billion in 1985 to \$46 billion in 1986. During the same period, the cost of manufactured goods rose to 20 percent. This trend in the deterioration of the terms of trade is expected to worsen. In 1986, total aid flows were \$18 billion. However, Africa paid out \$15 billion in debt service.²²

Yet another alarming decline is to be found in agricultural production. As a percentage of total production, agriculture accounts for 60 percent of the continent's output, 70 percent of foreign exchange and 90 percent of the source of income. The rate of growth of food production was only 0.7 percent between 1970 and 1982 while the continent average of population growth was nearly 3 percent per annum. For most countries and in spite of increased allocation of

¹⁹ See Callaghy (1988), p. 11.

²⁰ See Onimode (1989), p. 3.

²¹ See Salih (1990).

²² See UN (1987), *Africa: One Year Later*.

resources to agriculture, there has been a net decline in food production.

The causes and effects of African agrarian crisis are numerous, and a discussion of these is beyond the scope of this paper.²³ These problems include misguided development strategies; political issues such as wars, rapid urbanization; and ecological factors such as recurrent droughts. Throughout the 1980s, large areas of Africa were afflicted by drought, famine and desertification. The carrying capacity of the region is extremely limited given the nature of the resource base. Over two-thirds of the land area is arid or semi-arid and rainfall is slight and variable.

In the past, the establishment of large-scale mechanized agricultural projects, concentration of population and livestock around water resources and rapid urbanization²⁴ which has in turn increased demands for firewood and charcoal, have all contributed to ecological degradation. Presently, the pace of deforestation, soil erosion and desertification is alarming and all of these have put a break on Africa's capacity to feed itself. The catastrophic consequences of ecological degradation, such as famines, floods and mass movements of the population have become regular media images of Africa. When these calamities occur in countries where there are wars, such as the Horn of Africa, millions of people become homeless, displaced or destitute. Moreover, continued wars and reduced resources limit the sustainability of environmental rehabilitation.²⁵

Available sources indicate that Africa accounts for over 60 percent of worldwide deforestation.²⁶ The drought in the Sahel is indicative of systemic crop failures, widespread tree mortality and disappearance of vegetation over large areas. The natural resource depletion and the worsening state of the environment threatens to become increasingly more severe and has reduced the productive potential of the entire ecological system.²⁷

²³ See Cheru (1989).

²⁴ See Stren and White, eds., (1989).

²⁵ For specific case studies of these constraints see Stahl (1990). For various types of ecological degradation in one of the worst affected projects based on indigenous knowledge, see Rahmato (1987). For the extent of the problem and coping mechanisms of farming communities in West Africa, see Mortimore (1989).

²⁶ See World Resources Institute (1986).

²⁷ See Timberlake (1985).

The other dimensions of the African economy include the so-called 'formal and informal sectors'. The latter includes employment in administration, industry and the service sector. The manufacturing sector is relatively small and stagnating at around 10 percent of GDP and 9 percent of employment between 1965 and 1987. Reduction of imports due to lack of foreign exchange has triggered a process of de-industrialization mainly due to the underutilization of import dependent productive capacity. Within the industrial sector, mining and oil production make substantial contributions to Africa's GDP. In the 1980s, mining's share of the GDP was 13 percent. According to the World Bank, however, "growth has been limping at no more than 0.2 percent annually in the 1980s, a tenth of the World's average. And yet Africa has known reserves richer than those elsewhere".²⁸

Unlike the formal sector, however, the informal sector is experiencing "explosive growth" and is said to be the "most dynamic" part of African economies.²⁹ Although accurate data is hard to come by because of the largely unrecorded nature of the sector, it provides employment for large portions of the labour force. In many countries, "it makes up a significant part of the total economy. It does not consist of marginal activity; in fact it is booming. Nor are its participants engaged in waiting period activity; many of them are happy with their situation and have no plans to move to the formal economy".³⁰ The economic activities of this wide ranging sector are not fully reflected in national accounts.

The estimated percentage of "the labour force employed in this sector ranges from 20 to 80 percent; in general, it is agreed that it provides over 50 percent of urban jobs".³¹ Data is much more available for West African major cities. In Lagos and Dakar, it is estimated that over 50 percent of the jobs are provided by this sector; in Abidjan, 30 percent; in Benin City, 60 percent; 60 to 70 percent in Kamasí, Ghana and 73 percent in Ouagadougou. Observers estimate that the sector may in fact constitute a larger share in small towns.³²

²⁸ See World Bank (1989) p. 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³⁰ See MacGaffey and Windsperger (1989) p. 81.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Traeger (1987).

All the above-mentioned factors (reduced growth rates in GDP, exports and savings and mounting debt-servicing obligations) have implied increased unemployment, sharp reductions in real incomes, declining per capita food consumption and mass starvation, and have altered the relative welfare of different social groups. All the available evidence points to the fact that it is poor women who are increasingly forced to carry the heaviest burden to 'adjust' and manage the crisis.

Responses to the crisis

The response to the African crisis has been as varied as the nature of the multiple crisis facing Africa. In 1984-85, as the crisis in Africa deepened, world attention was focused on the devastating famine, drought and the resultant social misery of the population in the affected areas. The accompanying call was for emergency relief. It soon became obvious that what Africa needed was a long-term strategy that would initiate a process of self-sustained transformation. In the hope of shifting the momentum created in response to the emergency toward commitment to long-term strategy, a special session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Critical Economic Situation in Africa was held in mid-1986.

This was the first time in its history that the UN held a general assembly that focused on the plight of one continent. Ironically, this event marked the demise of multilateral aid even as it underscored the importance of new social forces that are indispensable to long-term solutions to the African crisis. Chief among these are non-governmental organizations and the working women of Africa.

Through a document entitled Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) 1986-90, representing the views of African governments, the proposed program promises a new approach to development based on changes in internal policies and mobilization of additional resources. In addition, it anticipates additional resources from donor countries. It calls for a 'new partnership' between Africa and the international community based on shared responsibilities and a constructive international economic environment. The new approach to development was to be promised national and collective self-reliance.

The predominant response from the North was an outright rejection of the spirit of APPER and the major requests therein - no improvements in commodity prices, no increase in concessional financing and no relief of the debt burden. The preferred solution was export-led development in the context of Stabilization and Structural

Adjustment Programs. As for the call to strengthen international solidarity, the response of the North was preference toward bilateral solutions based on priorities of individual countries. It was in such a context of a weakened multilateral environment that the meeting ended with the adoption of a compromised declaration known as the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD). The anticipated recovery is nowhere in sight. In the majority of cases, the crisis continues to deepen and the overall picture is one of unrelenting gloom.

It is worthwhile to note that APPER acknowledged women's role in food production. It states that, "in view of the importance accorded to food self-sufficiency and the acknowledged role of women in food production in the continent, the pivotal role of women in this sector must be recognized and encouraged".³³ It is not at all clear how this laudatory, albeit paternal, statement was to be translated into concrete measures. To begin with, socio-economic and legal transformations which would be beneficial to women have never been high on the African development agenda. Presently, while official rhetoric hardly ever fails to include mention of a never well-defined notion of women and development, given the weak domestic revenue and declining foreign exchange receipts in the near future, women's interest is going to depend principally on external aid. In the meantime, the implementation of structural adjustment programs has begun to erode even the few gains women have made since independence. Development has come to mean the maximization of foreign exchange earnings in order to service the debt.

Another voice which acknowledged women's pivotal role at the General Assembly meeting was that of the representatives of African NGOs. Transcending the deadlocked debate between external forces who see the cause of the crisis as 'domestic policy shortcomings' and 'internal mismanagement' and the African governments who until recently tended to put the blame on the inequitable 'international economic environment', the African NGOs pointed out that it is not an either/or situation. Both the external environment such as deteriorating terms of trade, massive capital outflows, reduced inflows or resources and post-colonial development strategies have been defective and deleterious both for the majority of the population and the national resources of the different countries. The NGO representatives emphasized that a solution to the crisis necessitates a political framework of democratic process which is participatory and 'people-oriented'. Here again women's role in Africa's development

³³ OAU (1986).

was firmly noted. Since then a number of women have been elected to the coordinating body of Pan-African NGOs.

The response of African women has been to cast off their earlier illusions about the benevolent African state.³⁴ While appreciative of official recognition and programs, their enthusiasm and active participation are reserved for concrete projects which promise to at least ameliorate the daily existence of their households. What is more, African women have had a long tradition of solving problems through multiple forms of social networks.³⁵ In other words, grassroot movements are not new. To be sure, their horizons have broadened and will undoubtedly continue to do so. In what follows, I will attempt to indicate recent micro-policy shifts and its implication for women with special emphasis on agriculture and the informal sector.

The impact of structural adjustment programs

As indicated earlier, in the 1980s development has become synonymous with Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) with their single-minded thrust to adjust national economies to the changing international economic situation through the restoration of balance-of-payment equilibrium, increasing exports and restoring growth rates. As noted in a recent study, to date there are only a handful of studies on the specific implication of SAP for women and much of what is discussed "is somewhat speculative and inferential".³⁶ One of the problems is the inability to provide data on social indicators prior to the implementation of SAP. While it is true that SAP has accelerated and magnified problems such as women's deteriorating conditions of existence, child and maternal mortality rates, un-

³⁴ See Tripp (1989), p. 614, a fascinating study where she quotes a Tanzanian woman who said,

"I sincerely thank Nyerere for putting Tanzanians through so much hardships. He taught us something which we did not know. We learned the hard way. Women are getting confidence that they can stand on their own."

³⁵ See Rahmato (1989) for useful observation on women's survival strategies in Ethiopia. Tripp (1989) showing the growing importance of women's informal networks. Also, MacGaffey and Windsperger (1989). However, the reasons behind the proliferation and glorification of women's informal networks at the present conjunction need to be looked at carefully. My own unease comes from reading titles such as Rothschild, (1989) and the subsequent World Bank report (1989).

³⁶ Feldman (1989).

employment and widespread poverty and as well, has created new ones, these problems pre-dated the implementation of SAP.

The overall implication of SAP continues to inform most debates on contemporary Africa. Although sufficient data is not available, it is possible to indicate some of the policy outcomes. Overall critiques have argued that the principal aim of the program is to establish a new pattern of accumulation. The cuts in State spending, as evidenced by the withdrawal of the standard of living subsidy; retrenchment of civil servants; imposition of taxation on social demands (i.e., health, education, water, etc.) coupled with impressive price and wage policies promote a regressive distribution of income for workers. These policies have led to a drastic rise in unemployment and underemployment. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in self-employment and in the number of hours worked in order to meet basic needs. Because of the sexual division of labour, these transformations are experienced differentially by different social groups and by men and women.

The available data indicates that cuts in public sector funding and subsidies have meant rising infant mortality rates; severe food shortages leading to cuts in the frequency of meals consumed a day; changes in women's work patterns, whereby food production and cash earned take precedence over women's household tasks such as cooking, fuel and water collection. In addition, women switch to growing less nutritious crops which demand less labour input. The conclusions of a study of the Economic Recovery Program in Mozambique can be generalized to most countries. It states, "for the vast majority of the population, the ERP has brought extreme hardship, forcing most people to a series of desperate schemes and scams. The broader social fabric had deteriorated to one of individual survival at all costs. Social differentiation had increased dramatically, a small group of traders, larger farmers, private entrepreneurs and corrupt officials in State and military structure is visibly prospering".³⁷ Cost recovery in education and health has meant a growing number of school dropouts, especially girls who have to help their mothers, poor performance in school from malnutrition, poor health and a growing loss of interest in education.

³⁷ Marshall (1990).

Structural adjustment and agriculture

As far as agriculture is concerned, the policy encourages the intensification of export crop production and has a tendency to 'neglect' the food sector. The policy of getting prices right is intended to lessen State control over agricultural surplus and encouraging market forces to replace state marketing boards. Agricultural aid is to be targeted to areas with the greatest potential and to larger farmers. Devaluing the exchange rate is meant to facilitate exports. There is scattered evidence that this policy has accelerated the process of land accumulation and the growth of a market in rural lands.

What is striking about African land tenure is the heterogeneity of land rights access and ownership patterns.³⁸ These diverse and parallel systems of tenure and rights to farm include communal usufructuary systems, loaning, pledging, different forms of labour renting associated with squatters and share contractors, fixed rents, leasing, freehold purchase and land nationalization. Although women did not own land in the majority of cases, they had usufructuary rights of varying types. The recent observations that access to land is no longer as easy as it used to be, that in many areas, land is becoming scarcer and that private tenure, rents and leasing are now much more widespread³⁹ will certainly affect most women farmers negatively.

Impact on women farmers

With the exception of a handful of women who have sufficient access to off-farm income, most rural women will not have the requisite capital to purchase land. To date, the experience of rural women with consolidation and land registration schemes have almost always been negative. Most land reform programs provide titled deeds, largely to individual men, leaving women without security or loan guarantees.⁴⁰ The new remunerative produce prices and incentives policy will most certainly increase the demand for women's labour both

³⁸ Siddle and Swindell (1990).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ See Mackenzie (1986) who shows that an average of 11.7 percent of land in a particular village in Kenya was purchased by women. "Although many purchases have likely been made by the educated elite with access to formal employment, this is by no means universal and should not distract from the significance of the trend."

generally and at particular points in the cultivation cycle, because at present and in the near future, the strategy of increasing agricultural productivity is based on intensification of land use rather than implementation of large-scale irrigation and drainage schemes.

It should be emphasized, however, that given their accumulated experience since the introduction of cash cropping and particularly their growing need for cash income, the allocation of labour and the control over the process of that labour are going to be much more conflictual than they have been in the past. There is growing evidence that in a number of places, women are beginning to demand direct payment of part of the proceeds.⁴¹ Even when these nuances are taken into account, the immediate outcome of increased cash cropping will be a substantive increase of the burden of women's work. Finally, there are some indications which suggest an increase in women's seasonal employment in agriculture.

Women in the informal sector

Denied access to formal employment, African women have always been engaged in 'informal sector' activities. But the informal sector is a problematic concept because of its heterogeneity, encompassing a wide range of activities from the marginal to the highly lucrative. In the main, it includes small-scale manufacturing and repairs, construction, trade and services, transborder trade and transport. In the majority of cases, women's activities relate to their domestic roles as provider of food, beer, sexual companionship and childcare. In much of the continent, women dominate the market trade in food. In the majority of cases, they sell food which they themselves have produced, often a very labour-intensive activity. In West Africa, women traders play a crucial role in the supply of foods to towns by purchasing large supplies from rural areas and transporting it to town. The more successful of these, known as 'commodity queens', or 'Nama Benz', have powerful unions and sufficient capital, not only to finance their own diversified business, but to also issue credit to small-scale farmers. A relatively new and lucrative activity for urban women is market gardening and selling of vegetables to the city's market.

⁴¹ Jones (1981).

In the service sector, women are concentrated in the more subordinate type of service occupations (i.e., domestic workers, waitresses and cooks). Some have managed to enter the export-import trade and move into large market stalls and real estate. The most well-documented, widely practised and risky activity, especially in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa, is illegal beer brewing. "In the Pumwani and Mathare Valley squatter settlements of Nairobi, women who invested their earning from illegal beer brewing and prostitution in building houses make up most of the landlords in these areas."⁴²

Following the 'virtual disintegration' of the formal economy, drastic decline in living standards of most urban households, and growing levels of retrenchment in the public sector, the informal sector has registered a high rate of growth. In the face of all difficulties, a number of governments have ceased harassing entrepreneurs and have begun issuing licensing fees. However, as these are fixed arbitrarily without any serious attempt to assess income obtained from various enterprises, women tend to lose out. First, getting the licence often entails paying bribes which are themselves much higher than the cost of the licence. Second, women in low-capital, low-income projects had to pay the same licence fee as carpenters and masons, who generally earn some of the highest incomes in the informal sector. Overall, the increased pressure on the informal sector to absorb unemployed workers and the subsequent crowding of the sector tend to limit women's chances of expanding their activities. Finally, another problem is fuel scarcity. In income-generating activities such as food processing and beer brewing, the difficulty of procuring adequate low-cost fuel supplies is a major constraint facing women.

The significant point about this sector is not its income-generating potential. For most women, their earnings are a pittance. The important aspect is the measure of autonomy that involvement in income-generating activities has the potential to offer. Studies are beginning to show the emergence of a newly found confidence among women, a determination to secure greater control over their lives and household finances. It is these emerging definitions of women's self-worth and the broader struggles for democracy that signal encouraging signs for Africa's future.

⁴² MacGaffey and Windsperger (1989), p. 85.

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Presentation elaboration

The major task of this paper is to give a profile of the African economic crisis and what it has meant for women. What are regarded as temporary calamities may be major shifts toward long-term trends, such as negative growth, the decline of the public sector, and the growth of the informal sector, all of which possess tremendous social implications.

Gender has offered a major critique to mainstream development theories. WID literature reveals the negative aspects of development, but the process continues to be legitimized, and women continue to be treated as an isolated social group. One of the critiques given by feminist literature is that much of the material on economic theory is male-biased. It does not consider or value the reproductive labour of women, including the way in which housework contributes to the well-being of the family and women's participation in the public sector. This has been a major challenge to economic theory, but the trickle-down approach continues to be espoused in development literature. One trend which must be watched is the use of a gender-sensitive analysis by institutions such as the World Bank. In fact, their perception of women can be extremely negative, in that women are being forced to take on the tasks of 'development' as a means of cost recovery for the state under structural adjustment programs. The situation of women has not been big on African agendas. If not for foreign aid, it would not be considered at all. When women's projects end, the countries which sponsor them do not take long-term responsibility for their continuation. We must challenge present resource allocation because dependence on foreign aid of this kind will not benefit women in the long term. There has been much documentation of activities that could have ameliorated women's needs, but a lack of resources is a continuing problem.

The public sector is being discredited and has deteriorated and this has had tremendous implications for women. Direct services have been reduced and the ideology of education and public-sector employment for women is declining. Women who had previously been in urban, public-sector and professional employment increasingly are moving into the so-called informal sector.

The general response to the African crisis in the West has been that of forcing Africa to implement structural adjustment programs in

spite of economic difficulties. The West will not adjust to African monetary needs, so the burden of imbalance has been borne by the Third World. African states have lost their sovereignty as more decisions are made outside Africa.

The NGO community has responded well to the crisis. Women have been seen as part of the necessary response to structural adjustment changes. Women are aware that their own energy and creativity is the key, and they have moved away from expecting outside inputs to ease the situation. As structural adjustment programs increase women's responsibility, women also increase their informal-sector and agricultural activities.

In agriculture, women continue to produce food, both for households and for the cash economy. Informal-sector women have been crucial for food distribution in urban areas, but the decrease in professional and public-sector employment means that some women will be crowded out of the informal sector by others with enhanced resources.

There will be important changes in women's lives as they increase self-confidence and change their concept of self-worth. Women themselves are beginning to appreciate their own labour contribution. Women understand that they are the breadwinners, and that they do not need to be dependent. If democratization is achieved, then the emerging consciousness of African women will be a key challenge for the future.

Dr. Patricia Stamp
York University, Canada
Discussant

African women's own insights into their needs is a crucial issue. Western scholars, and some Third World scholars who have become removed from the realities at the grassroots level need to remind themselves of the different subjectivities within which people live. Third World women see themselves as part of a collectivity, so that aspect must be integrated into any research carried out.

Zen Tadesse's paper draws together key issues and wider political/strategic concerns of women in Africa. She draws together quite succinctly the relationship between women and the economy in Africa. The first important theme is what kind of stance is to be taken on the issues which concern researchers. During the previous day's discussion on the complexity of women's reproductive struggles in the Third World, the North's need for greater sensitivity and

awareness was pointed out. The strategies which are being adopted are powerful reminders of people's own ingenuities. The 'social imaginary' is a useful concept in helping to point the way forward. It is important to focus on economic issues from another perspective - that of women solving problems every day. The view from below is vital, including the belief that people's own wisdom and knowledge are significant at the grassroots. The new-found confidence of women flies in the face of approaches to development which have presented Third World people and women especially as passive targets. Women can be sources and resources of information, to counter the dominant aid/recipient relationship.

Zen's critique of the 'women-in-development' enterprise is valuable. The WID approach has a number of assumptions which need to be challenged. Women cannot be seen as an isolated group from either men or the community. This underlines the importance of discourse. The tools of discourse analysis are powerful and can be used in uncovering women's knowledge and the struggle over meaning.

The struggle over meaning is a key point because it is a struggle over knowledge. The idea of a crisis in Africa implies various viewpoints, largely determined from by the North and by development experts. The problems in creating Third World systems of knowledge and practice may also be influenced by the way in which African scholars are changing their position in the professional hierarchy according to Zen's analysis.

There are progressive forces at work. Feminists in Latin America are linking their struggle for meaning to the issue of citizenship, for example. Redefining the informal sector is also part of the search for meanings in feminist discourse, as pointed out by Zen's paper. Women can tell their own stories and create new meanings as they engage in active struggle.

Dr. Krishna Ahooja-Patel

Mount St. Vincent University, Canada

Discussant

The international women's movement and the struggle for women's development has been a key factor in shaping my life and work. Generally, women in the movement do not celebrate enough their achievements or give credit to themselves for their struggles. There is a need to focus on the successes and the breakthroughs for women. We must look back, as well as forward, with hope and optimism.

It is important for the future to focus on barriers women have crossed and the long journey ahead. What is disturbing and perhaps confusing is the meaning attached to 'Third World research' - is it the origin of researchers or bodies who promote research that is important? The larger community of ideas and research on women's issues usually flows from the North to the South; the reverse flow is not yet sufficiently encouraged. Since the early 1970s, we have talked about a long series of crises which have influenced women in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World. We have seen the evolution of women's issues into gender issues, and the shift legitimizing women and development as a subject. The journey has been a long and arduous one and is not yet finished. 'Women' were attached to 'development' during the UN decade, when development strategies were being formulated and much research was being carried out on the connection between the two. But it is the experiences of women's lives that have brought this research into the academic world. Women's movements are its basic source and resource. The existing categories of research, premises and assumptions in almost all social-science disciplines have been influenced by women's demands everywhere.

The current revolution in political structures which began in 1985 at the international level means that new methodologies must be developed in both political life and research agendas. Women are an integral part of this process, as their problems are becoming political problems. No matter what development theory we consider, no theory corresponds to the issues women are bringing to the surface. For example, the economic concept of 'poverty line', for women, is continuously changing in many countries and tends to be marked by an increase in the numbers of poor women. More and more women seem to fall below the poverty line - no matter how it is defined. Current development research reinforces this view that the rising number of impoverished women does not seem to have an impact on policy responses. For example, women are struggling against famine in sub-Saharan Africa, Bangladesh and China. As food producers, women often go hungry.

Why do women seek paid work? Identifying the social and economic implications of women working outside the home has further pushed our understanding of why women are receiving lower incomes. Such available data is an important breakthrough, whether we look at women in agriculture or women involved in industrial development. The impact of industrialization on women requires more comprehensive research, as surveys have tended to concentrate on the lives of rural women until recently.

The knowledge gap between the South and the North and between women and men is growing. Women's studies need to move away from simply dealing with 'facts', to knowledge and analysis. Ultimately, it does not matter how many schools of thought emerge in women's studies; we need a focus on 'knowledge-based' as opposed to 'information-based' research.

Women have always coped with crisis and brought about social change in a silent manner, compared to other social movements of this century. What we have to notice is the qualitative change which has already occurred in knowledge about women. Women are taking more prominent leadership roles in governments, and sooner or later the numbers will count in spite of real political differences! Economic and social data can be globally quantified using different indicators than those traditionally used. Images of the North in the South are as distorted as those of the South found in the North. This distortion is widespread and the women's movement should not be part of this process. Production and distribution of knowledge are based largely in the North, while the recipients are from the South. The production of knowledge in the South as well as Southern innovations need to be brought to the North so that there is an interaction of ideas and new visions are created. The question to ask is, how can women's movements and women's studies facilitate this process?

Discussion

Four major themes emerged in the discussion session following these presentations. These were: the necessity of developing a macro-political analysis of women's development issues; the need for dialogue between different knowledge bases in terms of Third World women's development requirements; comparisons between the advantages and disadvantages of funding national women's machineries in the Third World as opposed to funding grassroots or alternative women's groups; and how women's development strategies should respond to the so-called 'New Right' agenda in development.

Irene Tinker, University of California, U.S.: The problem of the knowledge base has bothered women in the women's movement in the United States for a long time. Many Third World resources have been collected and brought to the North, and these fugitive materials should be put somewhere so that they are accessible to everyone. New CD ROM technology to catalogue materials and sort information for computer use could be a way of doing this. CD ROMs on women and development could be placed in the Third World and articles could come back to the North through the same process. This process is expensive and has been attempted through various agencies such as INSTRAW, but not too successfully so far. New methods of funding and organizing this have to be explored.

Rosemary Brown: In response to Zen Tadesse's paper, her comments regarding outside impact on women's organizations in developing countries were very interesting. It is surprising to find out that many women's machineries in developing countries only exist due to outside funding. This outside support is very dangerous because when it is withdrawn, what happens?

First World women are also going through a crisis, because our own economic restructuring could become a full-blown depression. Many Canadians feel that in tough economic times, overseas aid such as this should be the first to go. A strategy needs to be developed to respond to what happens when the money dries up because of this pull-back.

Finally, we are talking about all of this in a vacuum. We are not dealing with the larger political and economic ideologies from which

these trends have grown. We need to discuss these trends in terms of imperialism and capitalism rather than in neutral terms. Is this a conspiracy of silence due to discomfort, or because we can do little to change such political ideologies?

Zen Tadesse: There is no strategy to suggest, but it is worthwhile to elaborate on the possible negative impact of external aid on women. Of serious concern is that women have negligible access to national resources and little say as to how these resources are allocated. However, not all women's projects are worth fighting for. For example, not all women's machineries have been progressive. In some cases, they have allowed for women in privileged positions to maintain their status and jobs rather than help women who are actually struggling and starving. Some women's machineries, which were formed as a result of the UN Women's Decade, need to be looked at closely to see who they have really benefited. Often such machineries have survived because of a sympathetic donor attitude. Governments and elite women can legitimize women's projects, but can also make invisible the real day-to-day struggles and organizations of women.

Women in the North have to be clear about what it is they want to see changed. General economic and social change is difficult to conceptualize, and Africa is now being recolonized. Imperialism and colonialism have been blamed, but this analysis did not look at the internal problems created through independence. Sometimes forces outside and inside are in collusion. This needs to be talked about openly. It's true that the Third World is also funding the North through unequal economic structures, but other realities need to be kept in mind.

Maria Betania de Melo Avila: In Latin America, international funds have been important for the development of an autonomous women's movement. This movement has taken the initiative and it is the local struggle that dictates how these funds are utilized. There is a struggle to let women's NGOs maintain control of their own outside funds independent of the government and its bodies. In Latin America, constant changes in the political system necessitate the use of funds for popular resistance under dictatorship. Birth-control funds have been misused by 'official' groups and now these groups must be denounced by independent movements.

How this struggle must be played out is linked to a concept of development other than that of 'civilizing' society. There is no model of 'civilized' development which has really worked. We need to talk about what this concept really means. Northern agencies may plan

development for Southern people in a way that implies that the South contains no real people.

Peggy Antrobus, DAWN: The State no longer represents people's interests. The State is now operating to incorporate Third World countries into international capitalism. Some external resources have helped fuel resistance among Third World women's groups, so this is very important. Resources can strengthen autonomous indigenous organizations and can be used in this way.

Tadesse: It is important that external aid and funding for women continue, but we must look closely at the implications of this. In some cases African governments have lost their sovereignty. Loss of legitimacy is not the same as loss of sovereignty - the latter, the larger problem, means recolonization.

Robert Berg, International Development Conference, U.S.: It is wrong to be co-opted by a larger agenda, but can this agenda be ignored when it is actually saying some of the right things? For example, the World Bank and many UN agendas have recognized women in a positive way and these openings are providing immense possibilities and should be influenced. We need to engage with policy makers to understand better the constraints facing the development/gender 'product' in larger circles. The market for these products is there and should be reached out to in a constructive way.

Stamp: There is an honest attempt to undertake an exchange of knowledge about women and development but it is hard to introduce the view from the Third World. In response to Robert Berg's point, what do we have to gain from asking the people in power why our programs can't be followed? We need to be assertive and comprehensive in our demands. The 'New Right' agenda may be just another fashion, and I am uncomfortable about what exactly the 'right' agenda should be anyway. We need to access the knowledge sources in the Third World to shape a new agenda because the North should not decide what is correct.

Ahooja-Patel: It is necessary to look at new disciplines of women's studies to see the questions that women have generated, more so than we think. There is a real exchange of information at the women's studies level internationally.

Tadesse: The issue of knowledge and global agendas is vital. It is important to note, however, that where larger multilateral agencies are pushing things such as 'education for all', which means universal primary education, it is having a negative impact on other educational

levels. Education for all may pre-empt resources for higher-level education which challenge the domination of knowledge systems in the North.

Session 4

*Overview of
DAWN
Approach*

Peggy Antrobus DAWN, Barbados

Development alternatives with women¹

Summary

After providing a brief historical overview of the organization, DAWN, this paper discusses future activities and research priorities identified by DAWN. By bringing together the work emerging from the international women's movement and global socio-economic and political processes, DAWN's future efforts will address: alternative economic frameworks; reproductive rights and population policies; and the environment. Using a paradigm that focuses on the community as opposed to the market, DAWN expects that its analyses will offer critical support to the issue of women's empowerment.

Introduction

"Ideas do not succeed in history by virtue of their truth but by virtue of their relationships to specific social processes."

John Berger

In August 1984, on the eve of the international conferences marking the end of the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-85) the Indian economist Devaki Jain convened a small meeting of women who had been actively engaged in research, policy and action programs throughout the Decade. The agenda was to consider what could be learned about development from that experience. What emerged was:

- A feminist critique of growth-oriented development with its exclusion of much of women's unpaid work from national income statistics, and its failure to recognize the critical links between production and reproduction, and the negative effect of gender-based hierarchies at all levels on women's access to the resources

¹ With assistance from Nan Peacocke and drawing on papers presented by Gita Sen and Carmen Barroso at DAWN's inter-regional meeting, Rio de Janeiro, May 1990.

necessary in support of women's contribution to the well-being and development of their families, communities and countries.

- An analysis of the linkages between the systemic crises of debt, poverty, food insufficiency, environmental degradation, militarization, political conservatism and religious fundamentalism; and
- A vision of the kind of development strategies which would lead to the realization of:
- "...a world where inequality based on class, gender and race is absent from every country, and from the relationships among countries...where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated."²

This analysis was published as a platform paper for the Nairobi Conferences, and formed the basis for a series of workshops at the NGO Forum.

In the following year DAWN was institutionalized with the establishment of a Secretariat in Rio de Janeiro, and the launching of the research program on two themes: the food, energy and debt crisis in relation to women; and women's organizations and visions.

Over the past four years, members of the network have engaged in this research, as well as in advocacy at many levels, including the South Commission of which two of DAWN's founders were members. DAWN's analysis has been critical for the work of many women involved in the field of development, in the North as well as in the South. The book, *Development, Crises and Alternative Visions* is now on the curriculums of many courses in development and in women's studies, and has been used in training programs at many levels of the movement in Third World countries.

DAWN's analysis of the interlocking crises of debt, food, energy, the deterioration of social services, environmental degradation, political conservatism and religious fundamentalism, and militarization in the 1980s was timely: it forged a close relationship between the work of the emerging international women's movement and the socio-economic and political processes of that decade. Those processes were related to the global economic crisis and policies introduced to deal with it.

² Sen, Gita and Crown, Caren. *Development Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1987), p. 80.

The most significant outcome of DAWN's work during this period was its synthesis of the research carried out during the Decade for Women and its analysis characterized by:

- its global reach
- its focus on the perspective of poor Third World women
- its location within a paradigm of social change
- an approach which linked economic phenomena to social, cultural and political processes;
- the linking of the household to the macroeconomic structure
- a political/feminist orientation.

While policies of structural adjustment persist, in the 1990s DAWN is challenged by a number of new questions. These include issues related to events in Eastern Europe and the Middle East; the formation of trading blocs; the prospects of the single European market in 1992 and the current GATT negotiations; the collapse of socialist economic systems; the increasing concern about environmental degradation; and the threat of another global recession.

In the next period, DAWN will therefore focus on the following: alternative economic frameworks, reproductive rights and population, and the environment. We seek to explore the links between these, and to formulate alternative policies which enable women to secure a livelihood, control their fertility, and protect the environment.

It is hypothesized that the alternative will have to come from a substitution of the paradigm of the community for that of the market. Maxine Henry-Wilson of Jamaica reminds us that the questioning of the epistemological underpinnings of the market model and its replacement by that of a community was begun in the Caribbean in the 1970s, with Beckford's formulation of the concept of community economic enterprises. As she points out,

A community by definition is a set of practices, institutions, behaviours and relationships. All encounters are not based on exchange as in the market model. Rather there are strong stimuli for mutual survival, for protection of each other, for more cooperative relations. The two-person model of the market is replaced with interactions governed by shared values. Commodities do not become ends in themselves but means to achieve ends... The economic relationships emphasize a match between need and resource availability. In any community... it is incredible the extent to which people try

to use every resource to ensure survival. Entitlements and capabilities take priority over conspicuous consumption... The paradigm of the community can reduce remoteness and alienation, can give people control of their environments and hence make them more empowered.

She finally concludes that

The international environment (of the 1990s) would seem to dictate that without an enhancement of the potentially positive features of community - the removal of isolation, distrust and conflict - without a sense of our own resource use, without a concerted and collective effort towards certain participatorily defined goals, we cannot meet the challenges of the 1990s.³

It is precisely at this level that women, especially poor women, have the best chance not only of surviving economic crises, but for exercising leadership in setting the priorities for action, and for determining the way in which services can be delivered most efficiently, i.e., for determining the long-term requirements for change. Experience has shown that it is at this level that women's solidarity and empowerment can lead to a transformation of structures of oppression at household, community and bureaucratic levels. How this might be translated into changes in policy at national, regional and international levels remains the question to be addressed by DAWN's research in the next period.

The next stage of DAWN's work will be to study women's experience and address the question of how to reconcile economic viability with what women need and want. In the 1990s, there is a need for a new vision: something to replace the old dichotomies of socialism vs. capitalism, neither of which have served women well.

Alternative economic frameworks⁴

DAWN's research over the past four years, along with the challenge to socialist economic systems, raises fundamental questions about DAWN's analysis, and calls for re-thinking in three major areas. First, the case studies undertaken by DAWN revealed important regional differences in the way in which the world economy has affected countries, resulting in high growth rates in some, and low or even

³ Henry-Wilson, UNIFEM 1990.

⁴ This section draws on a concept paper presented by Gita Sen at the inter-regional meeting of DAWN held in Rio de Janeiro in May 1990.

negative growth in others. This has implications for women of different regions and calls for different strategies. Second, the major changes in Eastern Europe may have significant implications for DAWN's vision: although DAWN's perspective has avoided the counterproductive ideological trap of 'Cold War' rhetoric, DAWN clearly has a vision of cooperative and collective economic activity. DAWN's analysis has suggested that only such a vision has the potential for truly advancing the interests of all disadvantaged groups in society, and for building a more humane and just social order. The collapse of states in Eastern Europe leaves a large vacuum in economic ideas and alternatives to centrally planned systems. Third, the rapid spread of a materialistic culture of consumptive norms and standards in many parts of the Third World poses a major challenge to the argument against 'growth-centred' development. In sum, processes in the 1990s could lead to the further incorporation of the Third World into the global economic structure through mechanisms such as structural adjustment and the GATT. Social processes which propel the spread of consumerism make this possible. What is needed is the identification of those processes which can serve as a basis for challenge and resistance.

Despite these questions, the DAWN analysis continues to be relevant since it accurately predicted the impact of policies of structural adjustment on the poor, and especially on women. To the extent that these policies continue, it is even more important that DAWN keep monitoring what happens to gender relations in periods of economic growth and suggest alternatives which would protect the basic needs of the majority of the world's population. Moreover, events in Eastern Europe do not change the basic realities of the Third World. The growing pervasiveness of the dominant paradigm with its biases in terms of class, gender and race also point to the value of sharpening DAWN's analysis and vision. A central task for the next phase must therefore be the formulation of alternative economic frameworks which can address the question of how to ensure the provision of basic needs within the constraints of the macro-economic context of debt and structural adjustment.

DAWN will approach this task by

- Identifying economic projects or programs which have worked: an analysis of the survival strategies adopted by women during the economic crisis of the 1980s suggests that it is at the level of the community, and by drawing on social networks and cultural practices that women have been able to protect their families and countries from the most devastating effects of the crisis.

- Identifying what did not work and the impediments and constraints which contributed to failure.

Reproductive rights⁵

In the past few years, reproductive rights and reproductive health have become major concerns among Third World women. These issues are not new, but there is a new configuration of elements which justifies DAWN's focus in this area.

First, there is a new sense of urgency. Greater concern with the management of natural resources has brought back population issues to the agenda of governments and development agencies. The framing of the issues is sometimes misguided, ignoring the influence of technology and income distribution, and therefore focusing exclusively on population growth. On the other hand, tensions surrounding women's strategies for control of reproduction have mounted worldwide, as sharply increased use of modern contraceptives has occurred in far-from-ideal conditions, and decisions about whether or not to contracept have to be taken under very difficult conditions.

Second, there is a greater recognition of the fundamental role of women. This is seen at different levels: it is now widely acknowledged that the success of population policies designed to curb fertility will ultimately depend on individual women's desire to have fewer children and that desire is highly dependent on women's autonomy, their work opportunities, education and overall life conditions. On another level, family-planning organizations - under attack from right-to-life agencies - are increasingly searching for political support from the women's movements; many funders are much more willing to support women's organizations in the Third World.

Third, a network of women's health activities in the Third World has been formed, and has a clear sense of its strengths and weaknesses. Among the strengths are: the high level of commitment of groups of women in many countries; the uncompromising defense of women's right to decide about their sexuality and reproduction; the fundamental respect for the diversity among women from different countries, classes, races, cultural and religious traditions;

⁵ This section draws on a concept paper presented by Carmen Barroso at DAWN's inter-regional meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

and the growing recognition that political strategies have to take into consideration that reproductive rights are inextricably linked to economic and social opportunities, and therefore should not be pursued isolated from a broader agenda toward equality within the family and society at large.

Fourth, experiences in Brazil and Mexico contradict prevailing assumptions about the correlation between fertility and the level of a country's economic development. The coincidence between declining fertility and deteriorating economic well-being demands further research.

Finally, the apparent contradiction between pro-natalist, population control policies, and the new reproductive technologies points to the need for a deeper theoretical understanding of male control over procreation.

DAWN could contribute to the work of these networks on the theoretical level by helping the movements develop a deeper understanding of how patriarchal gender relations interact with capitalist structures in shaping population dynamics, and by clarifying the relationships between individual women's motivations and behaviours on the one hand, and macro-socioeconomic processes on the other. DAWN could serve as a catalyst for developing such a theoretical analysis and for drawing its political implications.

Environment

The extension of the debate on the environment into the field of development, and vice versa, provides an opportunity for the incorporation of the perspectives of poor Third World women. The World Conference on Environment and Development scheduled for Rio de Janeiro in 1992 provides the occasion for bringing forward such an analysis.

As we saw in yesterday's presentations, these are likely to be fundamentally different from those which form the focus of the current debate. In the past few years, Third World women have been active in movements at grass-root and national levels to protect their environment and sources of livelihood from the effects of trading practices and technologies introduced by international economic and military interests. At the same time, the re-emergence of the Malthusian doctrine of the threat of overpopulation has forged links between some environmentalist groups and the population-control networks in an analysis which blames poor women for environmental degradation.

An analysis of issues of environment and development from the perspective of poor Third World women can contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which socio-economic, cultural and political structures have contributed to both poverty and environmental degradation, and the ways in which these structures affect gender relations and women's fertility. DAWN could contribute to the formulation of this analysis and to a reconceptualization of environment and development which is more attuned to the realities of Third World people's historic experience of balancing their own need for sources of livelihood with those of their ecological systems.

This in brief, is DAWN's agenda for the next four years. I would welcome your comments.

Presentation elaboration

DAWN is a good acronym for this network, in that it gives a sense of hope and continuity: do we give in to the crisis and constraints of the 1990s, or do we use the crisis to find alternative paths to development (in the words of one of DAWN's new research themes, "alternative economic frameworks")? Through DAWN, women can help shape a counter-knowledge, an alternative, feminist epistemology. Association with DAWN has certainly enriched my own work and transformed my analysis, giving me a better understanding of how macroeconomic structures have an impact on women.

DAWN's timely analysis of interlocking crises in development forged a close relationship between international feminism and international processes. Forces at work have included the recolonization of the Third World, through instruments such as the GATT, and the loss of sovereignty and State legitimacy through structural adjustment programs. Structural adjustment policies are fundamentally inimical to women's interests.

DAWN's primary purpose is analysis, and this analysis has the following characteristics: it is global in its reach; it focuses on poor Third World women, through an analysis of class, race and imperialism; it is located in a paradigm of social change; it links economics to social, cultural, and political processes, and attempts to link the experiences of the micro-level to macro-processes.

Why were the key themes of reproduction, the economic crisis, and the environment chosen for DAWN's new work and for this colloquium? Trends of the nineties show the formation of trading blocks among Northern industrialized countries, the collapse of political structures, and new movements arising. Women should be able to substitute a community paradigm for a market paradigm. Economic relationships should emphasize community values and fight alienation. The new environment of the 1990s means questioning old assumptions and defining new participatory goals, by women themselves. The crisis gives opportunities for long-term transformation.

Solidarity can transform the household, community, and bureaucratic levels. Gender cannot be confined to token paragraphs, but requires a holistic analysis. DAWN wants to translate community experience into policy recommendations. Policies are not changed

only rationally, as feminists have found in development. A combination of research and political action is essential if change is to occur.

Analyses must be rethought. Regional case studies have found important differences in each country and region. The rapid spread of consumerism in the Third World poses a challenge to models of development which move toward self-reliance. Structural adjustment and the GATT process propels social trends which support consumerism. The processes capable of resisting these trends must be identified. Economic projects carried out within social networks and cultural practices are often successful. Women are organizing politically to struggle to do this, and the links with political movements must be made through research.

World Bank analyses show that there is a separation between the macro and the micro in terms of pronouncements and policies. The micro-level impact means that macro-level statements cannot be taken seriously, and the discrepancy which exists between these two levels often renders macro-economic policies ineffectual. However, the reality of the macro-level situation is that policies developed at this level control our lives and we must acknowledge this. The energy and work of women supports this invalid superstructure and this expropriation in turn results in the perpetuation of poverty.

Dr. Alicia Pérez Duarte

ANUM, Mexico

Discussant

I am unable to comment directly on what DAWN is doing right now because I am unfamiliar with their work. However, I am concerned with the relationship between government policies in our respective countries, the laws that support these policies, and our everyday lives as women. To give an example, right now the Mexican government is working on a national program concerning poverty eradication and women. I am trying to look at what the Mexican government's actions are in relation to what the World Bank does. The funding women receive to carry out research on these issues is determined by their willingness to follow the dictates of the government.

Change for women must start with a change of laws and rights. The law is an instrument of power, but it is also an instrument of education. There is a relationship between education, activism, and change in women's legal issues as they all affect on daily life. In a civil law system it is difficult to comprehend what I am saying, but the

major difficulties in Mexico stem from our legal framework. If women want to change things they need to apply pressure on the powers that are capable of transforming the legal framework.

Law is a strong education tool in Mexico, but I do not find much support when I try to advocate along this vein, so DAWN may be helpful in carrying out research in this regard. It may be preferable to have recommendations sent to women's organizations in our countries rather than to our governments. Our government is 'democratic', but the same political body has been in power for the last 50 years.

Mexico as a country has said no to GATT - that is when the economic crisis began in our country. Now our hands are tied. It would be beneficial if DAWN could focus some of its research efforts on what women's organizations are doing in Latin America in order to deal with the State when it tries to respond at the international level. Often, such a response has a fundamental impact upon women.

Zenebworke Tadesse
CODESRIA, Senegal
Discussant

The impact of international feminism, as experienced through DAWN, has been very strong and has enriched the final outcome for women. I just want to say that in line with Krishna Ahooja-Patel and Peggy Antrobus, it has been important to go around the world and meet with women. DAWN has been a tremendous vehicle for women, and I have been one of the beneficiaries, especially through the book they have published.

The choice of DAWN's research themes has been very apt, for the North as well as for the South. It appears, for example, that reproductive issues, their importance almost taken for granted in the West, are threatening all women. This is really a global issue now, as is the environment, which is affecting us all. The ideology and structure of the market is not equal for women because, in reality, due to structural gender disadvantages, the market is not gender neutral.

I am also concerned with the global collapse of the State. The State is no longer the giver. This is happening in areas that affect women most, for example, in health issues. The State should not be accepted as it is at present. Instead, women should fight for transformation. DAWN is starting to visualize this, particularly in regard to citizenship.

Another idea I would like to outline is that of social networks. Social networks indicate the ingenuity of women continuously. Women can celebrate their achievements, but these efforts can be credited and co-opted by groups like the World Bank. Ingenuity should not be translated into isolation, in the sense of institutions like the World Bank saying, "If you are doing so well, then we do not need to help you."

The structure of oppression starts in the household, and it is very difficult in the Third World. How do poorer women start? This is the struggle.

Discussion

Discussion of this session's presentations centred on the role of macro-economic forces in women's development, and the possibility for strategic alternatives from a gender perspective.

Nidhi Tandon: Structural adjustment programs are tied to Northern financial structures as well as to the role of Third World women in sustaining these structures. What is DAWN's analysis of these structures, including the alternative visions and options?

Peggy Antrobus: DAWN is still defining how its analysis will proceed. One possible alternative is that, as economies collapse in the Third World, governments will be forced to look for new options. Women can then fill the gap, under certain conditions. The State would have to provide minimal resources in social services, at least holding them at the present level, and women using the services would have to define priorities in terms of the delivery of those services. This involves fighting the fracturing of various services. The DAWN network will have clarified the theory and will have tested some of the new strategies.

Maureen Ahearn-Blais, CIDA WID consultant, Canada: Please clarify again as to how DAWN views the question of GATT and its impact on women. If agricultural subsidies are removed in the North, it may have some positive impact on Third World farmers.

Antrobus: GATT regulates international services and property through trade and the movement of commodities. The State is being required to sacrifice its powers to GATT and to multinational corporations, meaning that countries will not be able to protect themselves. With respect to removing subsidies, they are being taken away from the South as well as from the North, with serious implications for the Third World. I would encourage people to become better informed about GATT and its effects in both the North and South.

Rosemary Brown: A different perspective on poverty would be to realize that governments make a decision about maintaining poverty in their countries because of the need to redistribute resources within the 'poverty' framework. The infrastructure would crash if we didn't

have poor people. DAWN might start to look at poverty not as an accidental thing, but as something which keeps our economy going.

Antrobus: The very existence of poverty and wealth is the structure of opportunity, in economic terms. Capital uses inequality as a basis for the exploitation of resources - human as well as natural.

Violetta Manoukian, Consultant, Canada: The concept of the redefinition of development from a women's perspective means the concept of development from within the person as well. 'States of consciousness' is also a development process. The issue of one's state of being will condition how we perceive and act. This would place development in a totally different realm from a mechanistic, scientific approach. A holistic approach means that various economic indicators would not be taken as seriously. The dimension of meaning is also part of this process. The most creative approaches to development are now taking place in the 'third system' of power, at the level of people's power, centred on the practice of participation. The macro/micro link can only occur through participatory paradigms of development being implemented and developed in the Third World.

Janice Foerde, KULU-Women in Development, Denmark: The NGO consultation around the GATT negotiations in Brussels will try to use Southern representatives to influence the official delegations to GATT. They will insist that women should be part of this consultation and lobbying process. This round of the GATT process is far advanced. NGOs can still try to affect their countries' positions at the negotiations, but Northern networks must mobilize and start to look beyond GATT because this round is almost over.

Antrobus: I have a few concluding remarks. Women are very involved in networks against structural adjustment. Structural adjustment programs, debt problems, and GATT must all be seen as part of the restructuring of the global economic system. Questions of terms of trade are central, and must be addressed in relation to the debt: if debt were forgiven without a restructuring of the terms of trade, the debt would reappear within a few years. Finally, we must adopt approaches which address, simultaneously, issues of human agency as well as those of structure.

Jane Jaquette

President

Association for Women in Development, U.S.

Plenary session

The plenary session provided an opportunity for Northern participants to explain how the information shared in the colloquium could be used in their future work.

A summary of the flow of ideas indicates that DAWN is trying to put new demands on the international feminist movement in terms of the redistribution of power and economic resources. The mechanisms for doing this have been highlighted. The international women's movement remains an important basis for lobbying and other activities of this kind.

The complexity of the unfolding layers of research and action is vital. In the future, women's political action may no longer be directed at the State, because of the disintegration of the State in terms of both legitimacy and sovereignty. Do we (as Northern researchers and development workers) go 'down' to network increasingly with groups at the grassroots, or 'up' to put more pressure on international structures?

It has been fashionable to see women as opposed to the State, but this view may no longer be valid. The State has lost its power to the market economy or has surrendered its 'caregiving' or social-service role to women. The attempt to make women's role 'visible' in development means that women are being used against themselves. Structural adjustment programs are grounded in this realization.

In a globalizing economy, the state continues to regulate international relations, but has less and less control over the flows of capital and technology. This is a concern to NGOs, as it makes political action very complex, particularly since their closest object of lobbying may be unable to take actions which will deal with their problems.

As an example, many current arguments about GATT and structural adjustment have focused on costs, but we have not answered the rationale for going through the changes now taking

place. If we still want to sustain and expand the levels of production, what are the options? We have considered the possibility of opting out altogether, but is that really practical? The socialist alternative has collapsed on us, given the events in Eastern Europe, so there are no clear alternatives. How do we create true alternatives in fully practical terms?

Discussion

The issues discussed in the plenary session provided various responses to Jane Jaquette's call for a clearer definition of the strategic options in women's development research and planning. The major themes were:

- the need for more linkages between women's studies disciplines to share information and strategies;
- the challenge of building appropriate research processes;
- the requirement for new areas of cooperation between Northern and Southern women to be clearly identified; and
- the on-going necessity of developing new theoretical tools with which to understand women's development in the international context.

Margaret Fulton, Educationalist, Canada: I really would like to take issue with you on several points. First is the weakness of the existentialist view that you are using. The sense of hierarchy that you explain may be influenced by the world of patriarchy. For example, is there really an 'up' and 'down' view of the world? If we want to make change happen for women, we must demand an alternative framework and not simply cooperate with these essentially patriarchal views.

Second, I think that we have to consider the strengths of the nature of women. The one thing women have in common is that we are women. From this state of chaos, women have been finding alternatives.

Irene Tinker: I have long tried to bridge the division between activists, scholars and practitioners. Part of the problem is that the language is different. AWID was set up to integrate these three different groups and try to encourage women to become more active politically to change the world, even in a male hierarchy. We all need to work together in the women's movement in spite of differences. Women all wear different hats and it is a good thing that we are so diverse.

Rosemary Brown: We must do more cross-linking outside our own disciplines. One idea might be to have academics and politicians share more information, especially for politicians and policy makers

to learn from academic research and analysis. It should also be possible to do more linking between different academic disciplines.

Bonnie Kettel: I would like to share my experience in that I am a Canadian working with a team of African researchers. Personal and professional research issues need to be differentiated, but at the root of it all must be trust. The future for WID research and action has to be based on relationships of trust. What is the appropriate role and level of participation of Northern scholars in African networks, for example?

On the first level, the importance of collegial and supportive, yet non-intrusive, relationships is vital, but hard to establish due to Northern patterns of behaviour. Women committed to women in development must build these relationships very forthrightly. The other level of participation is that of debate, reaction and assessment. Tough responses to our research ideas and analytical frameworks are necessary for our ideas to evolve. A third level is that of how we think through what our own policy and lobbying involvements are going to be, meaning that the style must be changed. We need to develop appropriate skills and approaches through personal interaction and trust-building activities.

Janet Welsh Brown, World Resources Institute, U.S.: The issue of policy change is difficult. Global problems cannot be solved by the North or the South alone. We need to identify areas of cooperation where policy makers can work more closely together. Regional trade bloc formations can be influenced by these coalitions, for example.

Jane Jaquette Closing statement

DAWN's analysis is based to some extent on dependency theory, a framework which was buried by the realities of the Reagan economic policies of the 1980s, thereby losing some intellectual legitimacy. The current market forces may not last, therefore we need to equip ourselves rigorously to be prepared for the next stage of economic reality.

What this conference has offered is many new and varied interpretations of what the problems are and possible new directions for Women in Development for the 1990s.

This has been an exciting and extraordinary conference. We hope the contacts made will be kept up in order to meet these current and future challenges and crises.

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