

Integrating and Mainstreaming WID/Gender in the UN

It should be noted that the GAD approach is being adopted in the United Nations system, at least in principle, and that "mainstreaming" is the official objective. The Division for the Advancement of Women -- the secretariat of the world conferences on women and the host of the annual inter-agency consultations and expert-group meetings -- has been advocating a gender analysis to issues of poverty, housing, health, education, employment, conflict, and so on. The 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development is expressly based on a gender approach:

One of the most important steps for researchers and activists in the field of Women in Development has been the recognition that so called "women's issues" cannot be resolved in isolation from a broader reflection on the socially constructed relationships between men and women and more generally on social and economic structures and trends. In the 1990s, changing the status of women appears impossible in the absence of a rethinking by the whole society, and the type of development it pursues.

This has reinforced the conclusion that advancing women cannot be a marginal exercise of micro level projects. Nor will gender aware sectorial or macro-level plans be sufficient. The entire range of social and economic relations and policies needs to be reviewed from a gender perspective and the concern for gender has to permeate the process of defining the goals pursued through development. It should be a category of analysis against which to evaluate the risks associated with current trends, the success or failure of development strategies and State policies, in particular in the field of education, employment, family law, population policy as well as national development plans generally.

In 1992 the WID Division of UNDP was renamed the Gender in Development Programme (GIDP), which reflects both the influence of the GAD approach and UNDP's new emphasis on human-centred development. The UNDP has produced an

information package entitled "Programming Through the Lens of Gender" (UNDP 1994) which describes the steps taken by UNDP in developing its strategy for mainstreaming women's issues into the priority thematic areas of its programming work: poverty alleviation, environment, management development, transfer of technology, and technical cooperation among developing countries. As the Administrator writes: "UNDP is committed to a gender approach as an alternative and a complement to women-specific programming approach because we believe that increasing the participation of women in the decisions, events and processes which shape their lives is central to bringing about sustainable human development." The overview booklet states:

Gender is the social construction of men's and women's roles in a given culture or location. Gender roles are distinguished from sex roles, which are biologically determined. ... Mainstreaming women and women's issues is a strategic planning process to incorporate the specific and complementary roles of men and women into development. The goal is to ensure equal access for women to decision-making, productive resources and development benefits. ... The gender approach consists of a set of tools and processes for understanding how relationships between men and women influence development. The gender approach involves analysis and planning procedures that take gender issues into account, and that aim to create more equitable gender relations. ... Gender-specific data and statistics are facts about women and men that can be analysed to reveal important information about gender roles. Gender statistics are the basis upon which gender sound policies and programmes are formulated. (UNDP 1994.)

The UN Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), commissioned a significant book entitled *Integration of Women's Concerns into Development Planning in Asia and the Pacific* (UN 1992), with contributions by well-known male and female economists from the region. Although the approach taken is

neoclassical, the various chapters do a solid job of integrating women into the analysis of the allocation of resources from the household, market, and government. The opening chapter by Amartya Sen addresses the question of what "women's concerns" are, and distinguishes between well-being and agency. It also emphasizes the interdependence of the market, the government, and the household for determining policy priorities to integrate women's concerns into development efforts.

Nirmala Banerjee's chapter focuses on household-oriented barriers and constraints on advancement of women, such as the anti-female child bias in households which adversely affects the nutritional status and life expectancy of women; educational deprivation of women as a result of parental perceptions of the importance of education vis-a-vis the imperative of girls' family responsibilities from an early age; family ideology in some societies restricting women's physical mobility, confining them to home-based work; and consideration of household tasks in all societies as the exclusive domain of women. Noting that "for a very large number of women of this region, development so far has not provided even the minimum requirements of human life", Banerjee calls for immediate public action on their behalf, the most basic of which is education for girls, as well as provision of water and fuel to ease the burden of household work.

Frances Perkins examines women's market-oriented work and patterns of women's employment, with a view towards recommending strategies to increase the participation of women in economic development. She deals with the effects of policies pertaining to trade, the macro economy, structural adjustment, taxation, and the financial sector on the advancement of women. Her chapter attempts to test whether there is a relationship between the pursuit of outward-oriented economic policies and an improvement in the economic position of women. In comparing the relatively closed economies of south Asia (now opening up) and the export-led economies of southeast and east Asia, she finds that women's employment levels, income, and educational attainment are higher in the latter than in the former.

The chapter by Rehman Sobhan examines gender bias in allocation of resources by Government and criticizes the current approaches to integrating women's concerns into development planning in selected countries. It examines women's participation in politics and government administration, and shows that while women have been the head of Government in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines (and more recently in Bangladesh), there were no significant breakthroughs in the circumstances of women during their tenure; neither did women's representation in parliament or government administration increase sufficiently. Sobhan proposes far-reaching recommendations to improve gender equality, such as inducting women into government administration by placing five to six women in key ministries over the next five years as secretaries (or similar positions) of ministries of planning, agriculture, industry, labour, and finance; adopting a system of separate electorates for an interim period, say 10 years, where women would vote separately from men to elect women to the legislatures. Under such a system a certain number (say one-third to one-fourth) of the seats would be assigned in the legislature exclusively to women. Under that system women would have two votes whereby they would vote ordinarily as well as only for women in order to give rise to a new breed of women who would not necessarily be elected under the normal system.

The World Bank continues its work on women's health (including the Safe Motherhood initiative) and its research and policy work on the importance of women's education to national development. However, the World Bank has been criticized for the adverse social effects that its stabilization and adjustment policies have had, in precisely the areas of health, education, and welfare (e.g., Commonwealth Secretariat 1989; Cornia, Jolly, and Stewart 1987). As mentioned above, much current GAD research critically examines macroeconomic policies from a gender perspective and finds World Bank policy prescriptions gender-biased and even inefficient (e.g., Elson 1991; Joekes 1989).

The assessment and evaluation of mainstreaming or of integrating women's concerns into development planning and specific projects is beyond the scope of this

paper. This issue is, however, the subject of considerable discussion and many workshops and policy papers at the present time. Perhaps it is because of awareness of the difficulty of integrating women into development projects -- or the resistance to it -- that calls have been made for "gender conditionality" (see, e.g., Moghadam 1994) to be added to the growing list of "social conditionalities" that many European donor countries have established (which are at the present time human rights, good governance, democracy, and the environment).

What Are We Integrating Women Into?: New Critiques and Alternatives

A more fundamental concern is that current world-market and political realities militate against the investments in women that WID, WAD, and GAD proponents call for; that NGOs are being asked to take on too much responsibility for the advancement of women, perhaps as a way of relieving states of the financial and moral responsibility to do so; and that global economic restructuring and the trend towards flexible labour markets, informalization, casualization, and so on are inimical to the objectives of equality and empowerment. Persistent inequalities -- social and gender alike -- are thus seen as systemic rather than the result of misguided policies (Moghadam 1994).

In a recent paper, Jane Parpart (1994) notes that although GAD proponents rarely reject or question modernist assumptions, the GAD perspective provides the possible discursive space to do so. She observes that most development practitioners are situated squarely in the modernization paradigm, but that new thinking is questioning the validity of this assumption. She writes:

Drawing on the postmodern critique of the modern and the crucial relationship between power and language, some scholars are questioning the underlying assumptions of development with its uncritical identification with westernization/modernization. This critique of the modern, concern with difference and focus on the power of language has influenced the thinking of some

feminists concerned with women's development in the Third World. It has led to new questions, particularly a critique of development specialists' representation of the Third World as the vulnerable "other", and an awareness that these representations have often undermined indigenous women's knowledge and self-confidence. It overestimates the knowledge of Western "experts" and devalues developmental solutions coming out of the South. This approach argues for a more careful attention to language and to the specific contexts and locales in which peoples lives are played out. It rejects analysis that draws primarily on macro-economic data and broad generalizations, and urges scholars to investigate the interstices of daily life, the small exchanges between women and men, which reveal changes in gender relations that cannot be seen at the macro-level (Parpart, forthcoming).

Although in one respect I agree with Parpart's critique of the dominant modernization paradigm -- especially the current one associated with the international financial institutions, neoliberal economics, and the notion of the inevitability and desirability of free markets -- I do not agree that the postmodern approach can be fruitfully applied towards an analysis of or resolution to the socio-economic and political problems of our times. (The most blatantly irrelevant and morally outrageous application was Baudrillard's depiction of the Gulf War as mere text.) Nor do I think that the objectives of modernization or development should be abandoned, although it is important to define these concepts and objectives in a way that is compatible with feminist and progressive agendas.

The critique of structural adjustment and the "50 Years Are Enough" campaign have put the World Bank on the defensive, and have emboldened the UNDP to elaborate its "people-first" notion of development -- "human development" or "sustainable human development". The authors of the *Human Development Report* (UNDP, 1990-1994) argue that to live a long and healthy life, to be educated and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living are the most critical of

human capabilities and choices. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and personal self-respect. Development enables people to have these choices, by creating a conducive environment for people, individually and collectively, to develop their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests. In this definition, genuine human development encompasses more than GNP growth, more than income and wealth and more than producing commodities, accumulating capital and balancing budgets. Development is about people and societies, about quality of life and the enlargement of human capabilities and people's choices. Or as Kari Polanyi Levitt has put it, "Development is ultimately . . . [a matter] of the capacity of a society to tap the root of popular creativity, to free up and empower people' (Levitt, 1990: 1594).

Thus, parallel to the market dogma of economists and politicians, there is also the revival of interest in poverty alleviation and productive employment. These are, in fact, two of the three priority themes of the UN World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995), the third theme being social integration. The main UN agencies behind this are the UNDP and ILO, with research work also carried out by UNU/WIDER and by UNRISD. The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 9-16 September 1995) will also take a decidedly radical approach, a gender-informed interrogation of neoliberal policies, flexibilization and casualization of labour markets. At present, therefore, we may identify two, somewhat opposing development camps. On the one side are advocates of a people-first approach, with their concern for the social ramifications of economic policies and restructuring. On the other side are advocates of the market-first approach, with their emphasis on economic growth. The GAD specialists are almost entirely in the first camp.

Macro and Micro Linkages in Gender and Development:

Key Propositions

GAD researchers and feminist social scientists have contributed in important ways to the critique of (mal)development, to the refinement and elaboration of concepts (especially those of production, reproduction, division of labour, allocation of resources, and gender bias), and to the integration of women's concerns in development thinking, development policies, and development cooperation. They have shown not only how economic policies have gender-specific effects, but how gender itself shapes attitudes, policies, and outcomes, at both macro and micro levels. Below I list some of the key propositions in the GAD literature linking women, family, and the economy. As will be seen, these propositions combine the equity, efficiency, and empowerment approaches.

- Access to and control over productive resources are the most important sources of the relative power and well-being of men and women (Blumberg 1991: 100-101).
- When women are in the main "only" wives and mothers, and not seen as economically active, they are so short-changed in the allocation of resources that their chances for survival are reduced.
- The greater women's relative economic power, the greater their self-esteem and control over their own lives.
- The greater a woman's relative economic power, the greater her control over a variety of "life options", including marriage, divorce, fertility, overall household authority, and various types of household decisions.
- There is a negative relation between a woman's education and income, on the one hand, and fertility on the other. The greater a woman's access to economic resources, the greater the likelihood that her fertility pattern will reflect her own perceived utilities and preferences (rather than those of her mate, family, or the state). Conversely, where women do not have adequate access to the means of

production, and where men and women see children as unsubstitutable sources of labour, future crisis aid, old-age security, and so forth, they may want more.

- Where women have access to the means of production and income under their own control, household welfare increases, child well-being improves, and household decision-making become more participatory and equitable.
- Men and women have different patterns of expenditure and consumption. Women tend to spend income that flows through their hands differently than men, holding back less for personal use and devoting more to children's nutrition and family welfare.
- As women tend to be the primary cultivators of food crops in most of the developing world (especially sub-Saharan Africa), the neglect of female farmers (and their income incentives) may contribute to outcomes ranging from failed development projects to famines.
- National development is limited or is adversely affected when: female human capital is under-developed, female labour is under-utilized, and women are deliberately marginalized or excluded from the development process.
- Household welfare (and the well-being of children) is limited or is adversely affected when: women have no access to the means of production; they have no control over their income; they are denied literacy, education, or healthcare.
- Male bias in the development process -- the absence of a gender analysis in programme and project formulation, and the concomitant marginalization or devaluation of women producers -- could lead to outcomes such as failed development projects, household poverty, increased workloads for women, or labour migration.
- Although the supply of female labour may be affected by variables associated with class, caste, ethnicity, race, and age (social and gender variables), women's ability and willingness to enter and remain within the labour force depends upon the availability of institutional supports with respect to reproductive activities and childcare, as well as wage rates and income levels.

- Women's practical gender needs and strategic gender interests are highly influenced by economic conditions and by economic policy (fashioned by states and international agents like). The more gender-sensitive the economic (and social) policy, the greater the likelihood that gender relations could become more equitable.
- Change in the structure of labour force opportunities and rewards is key to gender equity.
- Productive employment generation along with enhanced access to the means of production are prerequisites for social and gender equity, and for the goal of sustainable development.
- Planning for and meeting women's practical and strategic gender needs may be incumbent upon a socially necessary rate of growth which in turn requires a resource shift from North to South as well as redistribution and a reallocation of resources within developing countries.

Conclusions

Since the political and social status of women is secondary to that of men in most societies, proposing an improvement in their status could similarly be viewed as a threat to the status quo. But women -- as women and as workers -- have demonstrated a capacity for collective action through their participation in movements and organizations for change. Women are not only victims of bad policies but are actors in their own right and agents of social change. Moreover, as a result of WID/WAD/GAD research and advocacy, of women's movements and of the efforts of various UN agencies, élites are beginning to recognize the practical benefits of gender awareness and of increased attention to women's work and women's lives. They are more cognizant that women tend to spend a high proportion of earnings to improve family well-being, and that development programmes or changes in laws, regulations and customs to build women's economic productivity and improve their earning capacity will have direct benefits for families as well. Using the efficiency language, it

is clear that both the imperatives of distributive justice and concerns about societal development call for women's access to productive resources (employment, training, credit, land, extension services, legal reform), access to basic goods and services (household needs, education, health, childcare services) and external resource flows (such as debt reduction and gender-aware development cooperation). In turn, these contribute to the long-term goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

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