

# Mainstreaming WID: A Survey of Approaches to Women in Development

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*Over the past two decades a succession of paradigm shifts has taken place in the Women in Development (WID) movement. Before the UN Decade for Women (1976-85), Western understandings of gender within development were largely limited to questions of enhancing the reproductive capabilities of women in developing countries through Mother and Child Health schemes, despite more forward-looking UN resolutions and Commissions. Since the Decade, much has changed; some of the paradigm shifts have been brought about by advances in the quality of data on women's socio-economic status in developing nations; others have been engendered by political or strategic considerations. This article begins with a (brief) history of WID and concludes with an examination of some of the practical attempts at 'mainstreaming' gender concerns within development planning, both internationally and within Ireland. The article, based on a paper written for the UNDP's Women in Development Division, is an attempt to synthesise and clarify some of the principal issues in this area rather than offer particularly original insights.*

# The history and theory of Women in Development

## The beginning

**A**s early as 1947, the UN established a Commission on the Status of Women, charged to 'prepare recommendations and reports... on promoting women's rights in political, economic, social and educational fields'.<sup>1</sup> Thus, attention to the rights of women was expressed concretely at the very foundation of the UN system. That this Commission was initially a constituent part of the Commission on Human Rights demonstrates a clear vision that women had an inalienable right to 'freedom and equality'. Even at this early stage, however, there were foreshadows of future 'efficiency'-based arguments for mainstreaming women in development:

Well-being and progress of society depend on the extent to which both men and women are able to develop their personality to the full and are cognisant of their responsibilities to themselves and each other.

Despite the forward-looking gaze of the UN Commission, throughout the 1950s and 60s the prevailing view of women in development was summed up in what Moser<sup>2</sup> describes as the welfare approach. Agencies treated women (as was largely the case in the developed world) as objects of reproductive potential, with motherhood and being wives as their assumed most important roles in the development process; since development entailed some notion of beneficial social change, this change equated for women with enhancing their health and abilities as wives and mothers. Mother and child health (MCH) schemes like the Mothers' Clubs proliferated, created in many developing countries with the assistance of aid agencies holding specific mandates for women and children, such as UNICEF. Similarly, large numbers of 'skills training' schemes concentrated (as some still do) on teaching women sewing and cooking, reinforcing a gendered division of labour within the household and society.

Though well intentioned, the welfare approach depended on a view of women as passive recipients of development; the problems of women's subordination by men did not even make it to the development agenda. Women in developing countries and in the West reacted to this patronisation with increasing anger:

Women know that child-bearing is a social, not a purely personal phenomenon... but our bodies have become a pawn in the struggles among states, religions, male heads of households, and private corporations.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, it can be readily argued that the emphasis on women as mothers was a very Western prejudice. For many developing countries, the crucial concern had always been the status of women in a broader sense. The critical role played by women in the struggles for independence was frequently reflected in explicit guarantees of equality within the new constitutions, and in the rise to political leadership of women in developing countries well before the same became more common in the industrialised world.

Ester Boserup published *Woman's Role In Economic Development*<sup>4</sup> in 1970, and with it provided much of the basis for modern WID scholarship. Indeed, it is hardly possible to read a WID text now which does not at some point pay homage to Boserup's pioneering study. The importance of her work derives from highlighting that development was far from a gender-neutral process: '[w]ith modernisation of agriculture and with migration to the towns, a new sex pattern of productive work must emerge, for better or for worse'. Boserup did not say that development was uniformly bad for women: '[w]hether this danger is more or less grave, depends upon the widely varying customs and other preconditions in different parts of the underdeveloped world'. Indeed better data than she had available to her in 1970 depicted just such a complex picture; but the need to look closely at the gendered impact of socio-economic change was a vital point well made.

Boserup's work coincided with a more generalised shift of development paradigm in the early 1970s. The apparent failure of 'development theory' to deliver benefits to the poor and oppressed by 'trickle down' begot a number of new angles on development as a process which hitherto had ignored those important constituencies. Where Boserup considered the plight of women, and Schumacher focused on 'Small is Beautiful', Paulo Freire originated 'conscientisation', arguing that any successful theory of transforming action 'cannot fail to assign to the people a fundamental role in the transformation process.'<sup>5</sup> All of these approaches shared features in some sense with the theories of *dependencia* (dependent development) which had their origins in Latin America during the same period, and which insisted on focusing development around the poor and marginalised in society.

## **The UN Decade for Women (and its legacy)**

The foundations for WID laid by Boserup and others were built upon by the UN during the 1970s. In 1975, the World Conference of the International Women's Year took place in Mexico, emphasising three themes in its Declaration: Equality, Development and Peace. One hundred and thirty-three governments were represented, as well as the major multinational agencies, intergovernmental organisations and organisations of national liberation. Growing out of the conference, the 'World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year' consisted of 'recommendations for national and international action, including economic, legal, social, administrative, and educational measures'.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, the Plan called for governments to set up 'national machinery' such as Ministries for Women to 'promote and oversee their national efforts to advance the status of women', and for international organisations such as the UN to extend assistance to governments and NGOs in this endeavour.

The UN system designated the ensuing decade (beginning 1976) as the 'Decade for Women', a move which formally 'put women on the agenda' and which provided legitimacy for the proliferation of a wide diversity of women's organisations in the South.<sup>7</sup> Five year targets for women had been set by the Mexico Conference, which included a marked increase in literacy, modernised farming methods, comprehensive health education and services, legal guarantees of equitable political participation and equal employment opportunities. The Mid-Decade Conference in Copenhagen (1980) assessed the attainment of these goals.

The conclusion of the Decade saw the 'Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women' adopted by the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women (held in Nairobi, Kenya, 15-26 July 1985), and endorsed by the UN General Assembly in Resolution 40/108 of 13 December 1985. Aside from the three continuing themes of Equality, Development and Peace, the strategies called for:

- Sexual equality
- Women's autonomy and power
- Recognition of women's unpaid work
- Advances in women's paid work

- Health services and family planning
- Better educational opportunities
- Promotion of peace
- Minimum targets for the year 2000

Similar themes recurred in the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and became an International Treaty in 1981.

The impact of the Decade for Women was large in changing the focus in policy discussions from women within the family, towards an 'understanding of the complexities of women's employment.'<sup>8</sup> The WID terminology, first coined in the 1970s by the women's committee of the Washington DC Chapter of the Society for International Development (and based on the work of Boserup) stemmed from an 'efficiency' recognition of women as an untapped resource for economic development. The term and the approach were adopted and championed jointly by the US Agency for International Development's Office of Women in Development and the Harvard Institute of International Development in a sequence of projects and casebooks through the 1980s.

There was another, rather different legacy of Nairobi, however. The Conference provided an international launch for DAWN, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era. Meeting initially in Bangalore, India, in 1984, DAWN comprised committed women mostly from developing countries who 'questioned the impact of development on poor people, especially women... and voiced a sense of urgency regarding the need to advocate alternative development processes'.<sup>9</sup>

DAWN encouraged a critical examination of the implicit assumption behind much that the UN Decade had emphasised, that is that 'women's main problem in the Third World was insufficient participation in an otherwise benevolent process of growth and development'. Studies cited by DAWN pointed out that 'fundamental conflicts have arisen between women's economic well-being and wider development plans and processes'. Such thinking remains a vital questioning force in WID debates today.

### **Gender and development**

A further analytic shift, most prominent in academic writing, took the emphasis away from 'Women in Development' toward

'Gender and Development'; this shift emphasises that the problems of women should not only be perceived in terms of biological sex, but rather tries to alter the focus of policy to a consideration of socially constructed relations between men and women.

Such considerations illuminate how the systematic subordination of women by men in diverse environments is modified by sociological categories such as class and ethnicity, religion and ideology. Gender divisions are emphasised as always and everywhere socially constructed, altered in their meaning and force by everyday social intercourse. In this view, it is hard to predict gendered inequities using checklists; the analyst must possess a fuller understanding of cultural determinants if successful reforms are to be prescribed.

Despite this transformation, the terminology of WID remains prevalent within the development field, and will be used interchangeably with 'gender and development' throughout this article.

### **Thematic justifications for WID**

Allowing for broad generalisation, there have been five categorisable approaches to WID, the earliest (and least sophisticated) predating the UN Decade by many years. These approaches are:<sup>10</sup>

*Welfare* (1950-70, but still widely favoured) to bring women into development as 'better mothers' and 'better wives'; these are seen as their most important roles in development.

*Equity* (1975-85; attempts to adopt it during Women's Decade and since) to gain equity for women in the development process; women seen as active participants in development.

*Anti-poverty* (1970s onward; still limited popularity) to ensure poor women increase their productivity; women's poverty seen as a problem of underdevelopment, not of subordination.

*Efficiency* (post 1980s; much in vogue as a justification when dealing with 'orthodox' development agencies) to ensure development is more efficient and more effective; women's economic participation seen not just as associated with equity, but also as vital to the process of development.

*Empowerment* (1975 onward; accelerated during the 1980s, still limited popularity) to empower women through greater self-reliance; women's subordination seen not only as problem of

men but also of colonial and neocolonial oppression.

The same elements appear in a tighter typology,<sup>11</sup> consisting of three 'rationales':

*'Truth'* The status quo in developing countries will never change without women; women's involvement in development is a necessary pre-condition of efficiency in socio-economic development

*'Justice'* The status quo is not 'fair' or equitable with regard to women. Since equity must be a primary goal of development, the status quo must be changed.

*'Power'* The status quo will change, because women are empowering themselves (gaining votes, voices) and will exercise that power for change.

It is important to recognise that these differing rationales do not, by any means, preclude each other. In fact, in an operational environment it is likely that the skilled WID practitioner will have to employ different voices (represented by these rationales) with different audiences. Undoubtedly, arguments about including women in development on 'efficiency' grounds have been the strategic choice for dealings with host governments and aid institutions in the 1980s. In the prevailing orthodoxy of primacy for economic growth with subsequent 'trickle-down' to the disadvantaged, it has been important to demonstrate to agencies that women are a key component without whom growth cannot happen – viewed as 'disadvantaged', women might remain just one group in a long line of those waiting for assistance.

Equally, it is not surprising that depicting women in developing countries as mere 'atoms' in the 'larger' process of development is seen as denying their essential dignity, and women's groups have been quick to react. DAWN has demonstrated the vigour with which many women in the South feel marginalised by the whole experience of 'development'. This vigour has translated into empowering activity: 'the actions undertaken by women individually and through organisations have been the most exciting and potentially the most promising events of the last decade... Women, therefore, have been the catalysts behind many of the actions of governments, agencies, and others during the last ten years'.<sup>12</sup> For these women, the language of empowerment and justice is not only politically effective, it is truthful.

# History and practice – WID policy internationally and within Ireland

## Mainstreaming WID

Thus far, this article has considered the history of WID rationales. What has been the practical experience in trying to integrate gender considerations into the mainstream of the development process?

Success was limited throughout the 1970s. Development institutions are (not untypically) slow to change, and institutional resistance to WID was a difficult obstacle to overcome. For example, until 1986 (the year after the UN Decade for Women had ended) only one WID officer was formally assigned responsibility within the UN Development Programme.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, from 1977 to 1987 the World Bank had only one adviser on integrating gender issues into Bank programmes.

Similarly, within national development agencies institutionalisation of WID concerns was slow. Most countries were finally impelled to some action by the 1985 Conference in Nairobi which closed the Decade for Women – the Netherlands was (as usual) ahead of the game, responding to WID after the 1975 UN Conference in Mexico. It was not until the mid-1980s that a specific WID mandate was agreed within Ireland. Even then, the Irish approach was found in 1991 to be 'pragmatic, and more influenced by scarce resources than by theory'.<sup>14</sup> Within the Department of Foreign Affairs, one individual in the multilateral section was responsible for WID issues (along with other duties), though that situation has now improved considerably.

Certain exogenous factors have helped to put WID onto even the most conservative of development agendas in the 1980s and 90s. First, where the UN Decade initially served to highlight WID as an issue, its perceived failure to deliver any significant change for women in developing countries has concentrated minds since then on how to proceed. Perhaps the most important achievement of the Decade for Women was to illustrate the importance of gaining internationally registered government commitments on women's rights as the legal basis for WID.

Second, the generally deepening crisis of poverty and debt in developing countries has assisted (perversely?) in winning

attention for women's issues. Structural adjustment programmes encouraged across the continents by the IMF and the World Bank have caused other agencies and donors to focus carefully on how adjustment and the economic crisis impact on the poor. As Vickers forcefully puts the case: 'when we speak of the poorest of the poor, we are almost always speaking about women'.<sup>15</sup> An increasing body of literature cries out for policy aimed at women within the adjustment process.

Third, in the last decade, 'efficiency' arguments were everything in development and WID practitioners had to make the case for women on that difficult ground ('difficult' because scarcity of funding, and the 'invisibility' of women and their work in national income accounts conspired to make demonstrating the key role of women in development more difficult than it should have been). The 1990s have seen a renewed emphasis on 'equity' considerations, within which it is arguably harder to ignore the inequality of women's positions. This emphasis on equity may be most clearly seen in the concept of 'human development',<sup>16</sup> elaborated in the writings of Amartya Sen and reports from UNDP. While not denying the importance of economic growth as a generator of (some) change, human development focuses on 'enlarging people's choices', and on their 'access to resources' and 'personal self-respect' as vital components of development. Enlarging what people can actually do and be – their capabilities – becomes what economic growth is 'for'. In this reformed vision, gender inequities clearly reduce women's capabilities, and thus run directly counter to the goals of development, since expanding the capabilities of *all* people is an indispensable part of 'human' development.

A final important point has been the continued pressure on international agencies from select areas of the donor community. The governments of Canada, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland have all been highly active in promoting WID on the development agenda by the leadership of their domestic development agencies and by their co-funding of UN system WID projects. Several large private foundations (such as the Ford Foundation) have also played a role. The pressure and support for WID by governments was, in turn, engendered by the considerable pressure exerted on them from national women's movements within their countries. The influence of women in Irish NGOs has been a key component in Irish aid's 'conversion' to WID.

International pressure has also been a factor in bringing WID

concerns into official Irish aid. Because of Irish involvement in the EC, and in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development), Ireland has to an extent been swept along with a larger international tide.<sup>17</sup>

However, despite the impetus given to WID by these various factors, the difficulties of bringing WID ideas into development remain immense. During the UN Decade, virtually every development agency, from multinational to NGO, and most national governments in developing countries established WID staff positions and budgets.<sup>18</sup> However, these were almost uniformly small, underfunded and isolated divisions within large bureaucracies. Without real power, the main activities of these WID divisions has necessarily been in training and in advocacy.

Recognising that marginalisation of WID concerns remains, advocates have urged a move to integrated rather than separate programming for women, or as it has come to be known, the 'mainstreaming' of women in development. But it should be noted that 'mainstreaming' can mean quite different things to different people: it can have an 'agenda-setting' connotation (i.e., transforming the mainstream itself) or it can be primarily 'integrationist' (i.e., adapting the mainstream to take account of gender perspectives). To date, the dominant strand has been an 'integrationist' one, though women's groups in the South, in particular, have increasingly emphasised the need to challenge the agenda itself: 'The central dilemma is the dual need to challenge the existing mainstream and at the same time be part of the mainstream'.<sup>19</sup>

What factors have hindered mainstreaming (of whatever sort), and what strategies have been employed?

First, the association of the international women's movement(s) with the WID effort may have had a slowing effect on WID's incorporation into the mainstream. As Nuket Kardam<sup>20</sup> has argued, 'the very characteristics that help a social movement succeed as a movement may often inhibit it once it enters the political realm'. Given that 'the rules of the game' were written in development institutions before the advent of the WID movement, an inability to translate WID demands into a language congruent with institutional values, norms and prejudices has often meant a failure to move forward.

Second, until recently, the paucity of research and knowledge about women's economic activities within the developing world (not least because of unsophisticated, non-gender disaggregated methods of national income accounting) meant that salient WID

solutions with a chance of success in institutional bargaining were in short supply. Much effort is now being focused on obtaining reliable research data, and on ensuring that in future such data will be collected as a matter of course, whether in project studies, or in national censuses.

A final problem is that 'mainstreaming' (in its dominant 'integrationist' form) implies a belief that equality can be achieved within the 'mainstream', that is the core of society 'where the money and the men are'. Yet mainstream institutions are seen by many as patriarchal, anti-democratic, and requiring radical change; not the least of those requiring change are the mainstream development agencies themselves. The desire to mainstream WID therefore becomes necessarily entangled with the mission to change institutions. Debates on WID frequently blur the distinction between the change which must be effected within developing countries and the change that must be effected within international development institutions themselves. It is clear that a large measure of institutional conservatism operates to sideline women's issues; it is no surprise to discover that senior management in many agencies are unwilling to understand the problems of women. As Buvinic<sup>21</sup> argues, 'development agencies do not like to tamper with unknown and unfamiliar social variables'. There is usually an inherent unwillingness to overturn 'social traditions', an action which is frequently the prerequisite for including women in the process of development.

Even were there not this institutional bias, however, it would still be something of a task to integrate any cross-cutting issue such as WID into the operations of a large agency. An issue as complex and all-embracing as that of women in a development context can frustrate and intimidate the best of planners. Personnel with vested interests, or offices with structural inertia will often function to prevent change. To some extent then, the subtlety of WID must be to find new organisational structures and modalities within the development agency itself.

### **Strategic and practical gender needs**

Carolyn Moser<sup>22</sup> has suggested one methodology which helps to overcome the blurring of internal and external WID objectives described above. Moser argues that practitioners should differentiate between 'strategic gender needs' and 'practical gender needs'. In her work, strategic gender needs are formulated 'from an analysis of women's subordination to men', whereas practical gender needs are formulated from 'the

concrete conditions women experience' and 'deriving out of this their practical interests for human survival'.

This is, beyond doubt, a useful analytical distinction; it also has power, however, in a wholly practical sense. The two categories involve very different types of strategic thinking, for they occupy different positions in the 'equity, efficiency, power' grid elaborated earlier. Practical needs may most easily be argued for in the context of equity, a well-trodden development ground, and one newly returned to favour. One can also often make the (rhetorical) case that without meeting the practical needs of women in a developing context, their 'efficiency' potential is never reached. This also is a rationale that finds favour with the orthodox within the development community.

Strategic needs are, on the other hand, the revolutionary purpose of WID. Desire to abolish the subordination of women by men sits squarely within the 'power' rationale, and as such is likely to raise the hackles of orthodox, conservative (and largely male) development institutions. Keeping Moser's categories in mind WID planners may lay plans for institutional bargaining more strategically, and consider how they can 'sell' progressive proposals in a cautious manner. As Moser points out, the very limited successes of the 'equity approach' in effecting legislative reforms for women has caused even those who embrace the 'empowerment approach' to utilise practical gender needs as 'the basis on which to build a secure support base, and a means through which more strategic needs may be reached'.

### **Analytic frameworks**

Since logical frameworks of one sort or another form the basis of operations in most large development agencies, it is natural that attempts have been made to establish an adequate framework for integrating women into development planning. Most of these frameworks are designed to operate at the project level and outline methods by which data are to be collected on the position and conditions of women in developing country environments surrounding proposed project interventions. The implication is that with such data in hand the task of meeting women's strategic or practical needs becomes easier. Perhaps the most widely used framework<sup>23</sup> consists of the following three elements:

*'Who does what?' - The Activity Profile* which identifies labour and activity in a gender disaggregated way;

*'Who has what?' - The Access and Control Profile* which

distinguishes between access to a resource and the benefit that derives from control of that resource. This distinction is crucial; what, on a first pass analysis, may be considered women's control of resources, may in fact only be access to them; access may be determined by others, whereas control implies that you yourself are the determining force;

*'Who gets what?' – The Intervention Profile* which builds on the previous two profiles to examine the (likely) impact of the project intervention itself.

Although this framework systematises examination of project interventions, it has been criticised for its lack of prescriptive power. It is one thing to identify correctly the nature of the inequity faced by women, another to design paths out of that inequity. The analytic framework gives a rigorous way of analysing a problem, but tacitly assumes that data alone are enough to indicate solutions.

### **Gender training**

Whether as an attempt to sensitise government officials in developing countries, or indeed to educate co-workers within development agencies, WID protagonists have invested considerable expertise in designing easily communicable methodologies which help targets to take heed of gender considerations in developing country contexts. The methodologies attempt to provide critical tools for analysing the gender-based division of labour, the resulting impact on ownership and control of resources, as well as power relations between women and men. Such 'gender training' for staff at all levels of the policy process – government, parastatal, development organisation – is increasingly the norm. Indeed, to many WID practitioners, gender training is the 'cutting edge' in the 'concerted effort to open up the minds and hearts of development policymakers'.<sup>24</sup> In Switzerland, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, gender training for agency and field staff is planned or already a regular activity. Within Ireland, the Development Cooperation Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs has now begun to regard gender training as a higher priority than heretofore.

Since the target audience for gender training will always consist of busy individuals, there is a trade off between a methodology which embraces the subtleties and nuances of gendered relationships within cultures, and a methodology which is simple enough to be recalled and operationalised by

practitioners in the field. Typically, trainers have found the latter to be more effective; an example of a successful methodology is to reduce the analytical framework described above to just its three questions: 'who gets what, who has what and who does what?' Such questions, or minor variants on them, form the basis of much gender training.

However, just as the analytical framework of the preceding section is seen to lack prescriptive power, so this type of training methodology only illuminates existing problems; it does not (necessarily) light the way to solutions. A choice has to be made as to whether gender training should combine (as it does in many instances now) both gender sensitivity/analysis, and the necessary skills for integrating women's concerns in projects/programmes. Lazreg<sup>25</sup> favours teaching the two approaches in separate workshops to emphasise the necessarily distinct skills required in analysis and in policy formulation.

Many would agree with Lazreg that these are distinct skills; but without policy formulation, some question what gender training can accomplish. UNIFEM has put this view with some credibility: 'It is difficult or too soon to establish a causal relationship between gender training and effective programming.'<sup>26</sup> The two sets of skills also differ in difficulty; excellent methodologies now exist for gender sensitivity training, but it is far less straightforward to generalise and convey the manner in which one formulates policy in a developing country context for alleviating the plight of women. As a result, 'mainstreaming' WID is often reduced by necessity to fighting for an institutional commitment to train, and praying for an institutional ability to make change.

To conclude then, we may summarise strategies for mainstreaming WID in two different categories, 'Top-Down' and 'Bottom-Up':<sup>27</sup> 'Top-Down' strategies aim to change the institutions and agencies which work for development, with the expectation that their change will promote the achievement of development and equality for women; they do this by:

*'Pressure'* by means of international conferences, colloquia, and consultations, which provide opportunities to demonstrate WID's importance. Data may also be used to monitor and 'watchdog' agencies' impacts on women.

*'Evidence'* to convince agencies that WID is important in itself, rather than applying political pressure to mainstream women's concerns. One approach under this rubric is collecting data showing how the inclusion of women brings more successful

development, while their exclusion limits the chances of success.

*'Tools'* which include gender analysis, frameworks, guidelines or operational checklists. An important step here is the maintenance of consultant rosters of WID experts.

*'Structures'* including staff appointments within agencies, financial allocations, and obtaining internal legal mandates. WID advocates may also argue for gender training for all colleagues and for systems of penalty/reward based on gender awareness and integration.

*'Bottom-Up'* strategies aim to go directly to women, either supporting or forcing their entry into the mainstream of societies, through:

*'Change'* by removing international or national, legal or social barriers which limit women's access to the mainstream.

*'Empowerment'* enabling women to take the initiative for their involvement in development planning or policies. These efforts are generally focused at the grassroots, and based on the belief that 'women can, and must, gain entry into the mainstream for themselves.'<sup>28</sup>

*'Support'* consisting of financial or technical assistance provided directly to women's groups, to give women access to and control over technologies, money, credit, training and education.

## **WID at different levels of the policy process**

### **Micro, or project level**

Since projects are among the primary structures used by governments and international agencies for building development, much attention has focused on how to include gender considerations in the project process. Certainly, development agencies have for some time acknowledged the need for targeting projects at women. Traditionally though, these projects have been disappointingly narrow in their conception of the needs of women, mostly centring on reproductive rather than productive labour roles.

Two versions of the efficiency argument have been the most commonly attempted strategies in the 1980s for overcoming this policy blindness. First, much data has been collected which demonstrates the 'invisible' but highly important contributions women make to the economies of their countries. The argument is, then, that for development to proceed, project interventions must create a climate in which women can continue to generate socio-economic change *and* benefit from that change.

The second efficiency argument has concentrated on the relationship between gender considerations and the success or failure of projects. This analysis<sup>29</sup> takes its power from the view that not only will what women do have a significant impact on projects whether or not women are considered explicitly in their design and implementation, but that 'most projects will have an effect on women's lives' whatever the intended purpose of the project is. Accordingly, the argument runs, potentially any project at all can fail as a result of 'hidden' power structures of gender within the target population. Gender analysis thus becomes an indispensable ingredient in the design stage of the project cycle. Such analysis is usually encapsulated in the form of an analytic framework, as above.

Whether gender analysis is actually carried out at the design stage is, of course, a different question. According to a 1987 report, there is an Irish Directive on the inclusion within project planning of gendered impact-assessments;<sup>30</sup> investigations revealed, however, that this Directive was as often overlooked as it was obeyed.<sup>31</sup>

A second question concerns the nature of WID projects undertaken. Should projects be chosen which specifically target women? Or should women's issues be integrated into every 'mainstream' project? Most agencies have opted for a balance of the two, believing that during the transition to a fuller integration and understanding of gender and development, there is still a vital need for projects which target women directly and deliberately as the casualties of systematised inequity. Ireland officially follows its European partners in embracing an integrated approach to WID, but has in the past undertaken WID-specific projects if they 'assist women in a disadvantaged position to participate more effectively in the development process'.<sup>32</sup>

### **Macro, or national level planning**

No matter how good a WID project is, however, '[i]t is now widely recognised that macro-level economic conditions have

much more impact on women's lives than WID projects, and that strategies for the advancement of women need to be linked to overall development strategies at national and international level'.<sup>33</sup>

In the aftermath of the Decade for Women, governments created ministries for women in many countries. However, Moser points out that a widespread lack of definition permeated these national-level institutions; they proceeded to 'implement a wide diversity of policies under the umbrella of the WID approach'.<sup>34</sup>

The 1990 *Human Development Report* of UNDP established for the first time indicators of national development which have a human component; but there have been assertions that these indicators remain gender blind. With the advent of the human development approach within UNDP and beyond, there have been calls to 'make women a primary index of human development'.<sup>35</sup>

Although there has been little movement on this front, there have been other welcome signs that the importance of gender considerations at the macro level is being recognised; an encouraging new trend is the development of national planning for women. While few countries have yet produced comprehensive plans for women, those plans produced have been ambitious and far-reaching in their vision.

One such was the 1989 Philippines Development Plan for Women.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps the first of its kind, this plan, approved and adopted under an executive order from President Aquino and running to over 250 pages, sets out to cover identically the range of sectors included in the 1987 National Development Plan of the Philippines. The intention is that up to end 1992, the two plans should be read in conjunction, and that in the next planning cycle there should be further integration of women's issues within the planning process.

The PDPW can be fairly criticised for its obsession with macro-level policy and a weakness in thinking through the connections between sectors and the implementation of policy on the ground; the implementation section of the document is surprisingly vague. However, such criticism might be made of most (non-gender specific) national plans which aim only to give the drift of government policies. The true significance of the PDPW may simply be that it makes explicit a recognition of the critical position women hold in socio-economic development for an emerging nation.

In a similar vein, some international development

organisations have begun to experiment with overall country action plans specifically for women. In January 1992, UNDP/Pakistan submitted its WID Action Plan to UNDP HQ in New York.<sup>37</sup> This proposes concerted action in Pakistan within the framework of the UNDP Human Development Initiative and the Fifth Country Programme (1993-98). Focuses are assisting the government of Pakistan to formalise its national WID policy in line with stated national objectives, and strengthening and promoting women-related NGOs. These aims are to be realised in a national context.

Another example is India, where the World Bank and the Indian government have combined to produce *Gender and Poverty in India*.<sup>38</sup> This comprehensive study analyses the conditions and problems of women working in agriculture and the urban informal sector, as well as examining more traditional 'women's issues' such as health, childbearing and education, as these relate to women's productivity. While the study does not engage in project specification it is prescriptive to a degree; it lists strategic objectives for each sector, and paints a picture of how to move forward. It also tries to offer a conceptual framework based on the present 'inside/outside' or 'public/private' dichotomy between the spheres of women and men.

National level gender planning is undoubtedly in vogue; but one is forced to question whether it is necessarily an effective means to mainstream WID concerns. While compiling separate strategies for women does accentuate the attention given to WID, it suffers from a 'separatism'. Can WID be 'mainstreamed' if it is differentiated from the main development process?

### **Meso level – UNICEF's innovation**

As stated earlier, much attention has focused in recent years on the impact that stringent macroeconomic reform can have on women. WID mainstreaming therefore also has a role at the newly conceptualised 'meso' level in development planning. As defined by UNICEF,<sup>39</sup> meso level policy interventions aim to address questions of distribution of resources within the context of an adjustment in some macroeconomic variable (taxation, food prices, wages, and so on).

In UNICEF's view, macro policy adjustments are 'influencing the conditions of vulnerable groups, in both the short and the medium term'. The objective of meso policies is to ensure that 'macro policies do not, through their negative effects on vulnerable groups, undermine other human face policies being

introduced, and at best, contribute directly to the improvement of the conditions of vulnerable groups'. Such policies might include targeting credit to small farmers during price adjustments, food stamp programmes, and regionally targeted assistance.

Recent research has indicated that while a decline in family income is general to any economic contraction, 'structural adjustment programmes, as pursued in practice, specifically reduce social support (i.e. the level of resources available to women in their non-producer roles), without redressing women's disadvantages in their role as producer'. It is logical then that meso policies should address directly the position of women within periods of macroeconomic adjustment; WID practitioners must urgently engage in the new policy dialogue of meso level planning. Practical examples are, however, disappointingly few.

### Conclusions

Women in Development has accumulated an impressive kit of analytical tools to overhaul the structure of the development project. However, institutional resistance, and a degree of confusion over goals have conspired to make progress in bettering the lot of women in developing countries somewhat limited. The evolution of national planning machineries for women in developing countries is starting to gain pace, but acceptance for WID is still disappointingly low.

As time passes and pressure to produce results increases while funding does not, WID practitioners have had to develop a high level of institutional cunning to achieve their goals. Since money is not forthcoming for increased staffing levels within WID divisions, WID is expanding horizontally rather than vertically. With gender training of personnel and an 'advocacy role', the hope is to ensure a continued presence for gender considerations at all levels of the policy process. If actual WID practitioners can not be everywhere at once, perhaps their influence can be felt if operatives are sensitised to ask the right questions in the field.

Certain key conclusions are clear, then: first, it is important to establish definite objectives with measurable indicators of success, necessary to ensure a legal mandate for the change it is wished to effect, and vital to employ methods of gender analysis and training to ensure the success of the intervention. Second, commensurate with an overall shift in approach from projects to programmes within the world of development, WID is moving its focus from the micro to encompass the macro level as well.

Finally, macroeconomic 'structural adjustment' programmes are having effects which are inequitably gendered – it is no surprise, then, that WID remains a prime focus of development thought.

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