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AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WASHINGTON, D C 20523

UN DECADE FOR WOMEN CONFERENCE

Forward Looking Strategies

Environment and Development

POSITION PAPER

This Position Paper submitted by the Agency for International Development (AID) is reflective of international sectoral policies and is not to be confused with domestic sectoral policies.

PROBLEM

Development depends on a sustainable natural resource base. Women, having a major role in the management of natural resources have great influence on both the quality of life of a country's people and their development status.

The linkage between women, environment and development is strong but more attention needs to be paid to the linkage by other donors. The U.S. can help improve the understanding of how donors can assist developing countries in improving degraded natural resources and the quality of life of the world's poor.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE TO THE UNITED STATES

The U.S. is the acknowledged leader among bilateral and multilateral donor agencies in terms of ensuring the environmental sustainability of projects being assisted as well as formulating activities to enhance a deteriorated natural resource base. Since more attention to this topic is needed by other donors, it is in the interest of the U.S. to ensure that others see the issues as we do and are prepared to develop programs and policies that are compatible to those of the U.S. It is appropriate to use this conference to express U.S. goals since women suffer the most from resource deterioration; it is they who gather the fuelwood, water and forest products or tend the marginal soils for agriculture.

UNITED STATES POSITION

In addressing this subject, the delegation should strive to ensure that others understand that the U.S. sees each nation, industrialized or developing, as managing its own natural resource base and its development process. It is too often thought that the donor community should do this.

Because of their important role and their knowledge about local renewable resources, women must be brought into the planning and implementation of development activities. They are imperative to the success of development, especially aspects that are at the root of pressures on natural resources (population increases) or aspects that depend on the

Conference on Women in Development
July 15-26, 1985

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sustainable use of such resources (fuelwood, agriculture, safe water supplies, forests, irrigation, rangelands, coastal fisheries, and safety in pesticide application and product usage).

The role of women to project formulation and implementation as well as institution building is critical; this conference should strive to see others adopt a U.S. approach to the environment-women-development linkage.

BACKGROUND

The role of the assisting agencies, like the Agency for International Development (A.I.D.), should be to help developing countries understand, express a commitment to, and develop the capability to effectively manage natural resources in a sustainable way. Until such a capacity is reached, each assistance agency has an obligation to ensure that the development it supports is sound and wanted by those it is intended to serve. Those to be helped should participate in project design. Development should also be carried out in such a way that it helps the people acquire the capacity to effectively manage their development and the natural resource base on which their future depends.

A formal or published policy should be adopted by each donor agency on relevant topics including: 1) assessment of likely environmental impacts of development activities, 2) support for restoration of degraded areas, 3) support for safe use of agricultural chemicals and pesticides, 4) management of natural resources and protection of endangered species and habitats, 5) Institution strengthening, and 6) technical assistance. This policy, to be meaningful, must be widely known -- especially to the aid-receiving governments.

Donors and recipient governments have focused almost entirely on the effects of development and means of mitigation. In order to integrate environment into the development planning process, environmental needs must be defined and prioritized with other needs. It is best if donors help define these rather than just respond to requests for assistance. Too often, donors escape responsibilities by claiming to respond only to the request of the assisted country.

Environmental priorities must be communicated to the donor community. It is equally important that the planning, agriculture and other ministries of the assisted country fully understand the financial and long-term consequences of leaving these natural resource needs unattended.

TALKING POINTS

Environmental advisors to 24 development assistance entities recently agreed to work within their own administrative framework to achieve the following points which can be put forward as being basic to the concept of equitable and long-lasting development.

- Recognize that responsibility for sustainable development is shared between the aid-receiving country and the aid-giving agency.
- Ensure that development being assisted is as soundly planned and as sustainable as practicable.
- Strive to strengthen the capability of aid-receiving governments to collect, analyze, and utilize environmental data in preparing development strategies.
- Incorporate ministries, especially those of planning or finance, in the analysis of the environmental needs of the country and the integration of these into other development priorities.
- Ensure that the people intended to benefit from or affected by development are brought into the process at the earliest possible stage.
- Encourage and support the enhancement and involvement of indigenous nongovernmental organizations as a link to the public through the pursuit of environmental education, problem identification, and community support for sustainable development.
- Establish and maintain a dialogue that promotes cooperation and coordination among all development entities to reduce overlap and ensure the best usage of limited development assistance funds.

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5/20/85

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