

June 1985

U. N. DECADE FOR WOMEN CONFERENCE
Forward Looking Strategies
Science and Technology

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:

Science and technology concerns are briefly discussed in the "Development" strategy chapter. The recommendations are relevant and generally worthy of support. The discussion might offer an opportunity to promote private-enterprise and democratic approaches to development supported by the U. S.

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE TO THE UNITED STATES:

Improving women's access to science and technology in developing countries is important because such access will contribute to improving their economic and social status. There seems little likelihood that the strategy as presented will be controversial, or that any specific point of contention will be of more than marginal importance to the U. S.

UNITED STATES POSITION:

The United States supports improved access for women to technologies appropriate to their needs and demands, and improved access for women to scientific and technological training and careers. The United States believes women should participate fully and effectively in science and technology policy-making, in order to assure that policies are sensitive to their needs and equitable to their interests. The U. S. supports efforts to assess the gender specific impact of new technologies. While the proposal to involve women more equitably in space technology is a relatively minor concern, it is also desirable.

The discussion stresses centrally-planned approaches to issues in scientific and technological equity for women. U.S. policy stresses private sector approaches to development. Rapid technological innovation takes place best in an economy

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favorable to the creation of innovating enterprises, with free and equitable markets through which they may distribute their products. Multinational enterprises are particularly important in the international transfer of technology. The U. S. position is that women should participate equally in innovating enterprises (including MNC's), including participation in management and technological jobs, and should have social and economic access to markets responsive to their technological (and other) preferences.

The emphasis on centrally planned approaches also neglects U. S. concerns for democratic processes. The U. S. position is that women should have equitable political power to secure their access to technology.

BACKGROUND:

If women have poor tools they will remain poor; access to appropriate technology is central to improving the economic condition of women. In many developing countries social and economic conditions combine to deny women equitable access to appropriate technology. They are denied equitable access to technological education. Because they work in non-formal and often unpaid jobs, women often lack cash to buy improved tools and work supplies. Women often have poor access to extension services. Sometimes the ergonomic design of machinery does not take women into account. They often lack access to capital and financial services needed to acquire new tools. Often women have less timely information about technological changes, as when new crops are introduced to farmers without alerting women to their new food-processing characteristics.

Women have been underrepresented in the learned professions, especially in some developing country contexts, and especially in managerial, engineering and agricultural professions. Such inequities usually stem from inadequate political and economic power to assert their rights, but in many cases they result also from cultural, social or bureaucratic barriers to access to technological education, training, services and products.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS:

The U. S. will oppose any initiatives that cannot be financed through the use or reallocation of regular funds. The stress on technological improvement in the private sector may be used as a rationale for opposition to new governmental initiatives.

