

New Strategies for Women in Development in the 80s

by Irene Tinker

Women-in-development as a theoretical construct is barely a decade old. When the themes for International Women's Year: peace, equality, and development, were identified during the U.N. debate in 1971, the reference to development merely reflected the prevailing attitudes toward development as enunciated in the documents for the U.N. Second Development Decade. Overall attitudes toward development a decade ago were optimistic; integrating women into development would bring to them the fruits of modernization. It is unlikely that any of the delegates stopped to analyze the meaning of that phrase: "integrating women into development." Yet it is clearly based upon the widely held assumption that women around the world generally do little work of economic value. Women's roles are perceived very differently in the various versions of the ideal modern society, so that integrating women into development must necessarily have different meanings and approaches in different ideologies. But none of this was mentioned, much less debated. So the U.N. delegates could join together on this seemingly benign statement, never anticipating that the women of the world would begin to question the underlying assumptions of women's roles in all development theories and so challenge the verities upon which much development planning is based.

It is important, in light of the discouraging statistics about women's progress presented to the World Conference of the U.N. Decade for Women in Copenhagen, to recall how recently the women-in-development efforts began.

The list of responses is impressive. The U.S. Congress added the Percy Amendment in 1973 to the Foreign Assistance Act; in response, the U.S. Agency for International Development set up a special office for Women in Development. Senator Percy is now the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the most powerful foreign policy post in the U.S. Congress. He has assured us of his continuing concern that women benefit from development equitably with men.

In a 1980 Foreign Relations Committee report, Senator Percy refers to the efforts of the Agency for International Development with concerns of women in development. "The Committee has a continuing interest in the Agency's efforts to involve women in its development programs overseas. The Committee appreciates the effort of the Agency to bring the role of women in development to the forefront on the list of priorities considered by AID project aid program planners. The U.S. emphasis in this area has had an impact on the thinking of economic and development experts worldwide."

At an international level, various U.N. bodies passed resolutions requiring that programs include women as well as men as actors and beneficiaries. Today most agencies have a section or position designated to ensure that women are in fact considered in the design and implementation of programs. Donors of foreign assistance have held special meetings about methods of planning and funding programs for women. Development issues were dominant at the Mexico City meetings for the International Women's Year both at the official U.N. conference and at the non-governmental organizations (NGO) Tribune.

The increase in literature on the subject has been exponential. In 1975 it was possible to pull together a bibliography on relevant materials

with some sense that the coverage was adequate. Today there are newsletters, bulletins, and academic publications, all dealing with aspects of women-in-development. Libraries around the world have begun to collect materials on women and social change. The problem is no longer quantity, but rather how to locate what is available so that planners and scholars alike can have access to the new ideas and data.

What has been the impact of all this activity? Not much. It is clearly easier to project goals than to impact policy. During the 70s, many of us tried to influence policy by collecting data to refute traditional development theory and to refine development planning. Others developed small projects designed to bring income or family planning to women. With a decade of experience behind us, it is time to review current strategies, in terms of both philosophy and programming, and to consider their adequacies for the task.

### Philosophical Strategies

Women work. Women have always worked. Women need to continue to work. It may seem strange to call such a factual statement philosophical. Yet in 1972 when I first began talking about women-in-development, most planners thought of women as non-working housewives. It became necessary to demonstrate that what women do is in fact work, and that only a few societies have the affluence that allows their upper class women the luxury of doing no work. That women's work is not tabulated in national statistics is more a reflection on the definition of work than a comment on women's time. By ignoring women's economic contributions to nation and family, planners not only left women out of their projects, but actually undermined women's traditional activities which include the range from rice harvesting

and the preparation and selling of snack foods, to handicrafts and beer-making. The first response by women to the male stereotypes about women was to collect data and design studies showing women. A growing number of scientific time-budget studies show what women have always known: that women everywhere work longer hours daily than men.

#### Women Work for Money

The daily activities fall into several distinct types of work: income-producing, income-substituting, and household tasks. As modernization proceeds, more and more women appear in the first category, but not all of them, for much of this money is earned in the informal rural and urban sectors. In rural areas the move toward cash cropping has had devastating effects on women's ability to feed their families. Study after study shows that the best land is used for cash crops; that too little land is left for women's vegetable gardens; that women often work with cash crops while their men keep the money; that women therefore lack money to buy food they used to grow; that nutritional levels of the women and children fall even when the family's total income rises. This scenario is typically African, depicting women's responsibilities toward their children as generally theirs alone. But similar problems are found in Asia. In India, women who are pushed off the land by new agricultural technologies form a new wave of migrants. In Korea, women save their money for educating their children rather than feeding them. Families are dependent on the women's income in all these cases, yet women are treated as a short-term labor shortage solution to be cast out again with agricultural modernization. We know the trends. We have the information. We need policies and action ... not more studies.

Women who flock to the cities are generally absorbed by the informal sector. While doing everything from selling from a cart to owning small shops and restaurants, these women seldom are counted in national statistics. One reason is the attitude of women themselves. As recent studies of Vietnamese or Korean women illustrate, in societies where the ideal of "women-in-the-home" continues, women themselves may deny that they work. Even in the United States, women who earn money catering meals or watching children may not consider this "work," or do not report it because they wish to escape taxes on this small income. Other studies show that some women in Bangladesh do not want their husbands to know they earn money, for he will expect to be given the money. Increasingly, household budget studies try to include income figures and information about who controls expenditure. Such data is much more difficult to obtain than time use statistics. While household budget studies are often recorded for the researcher by the women themselves, only observation techniques can be considered fully accurate. Money expenditures would require even closer observation, or greater estimation. How useful are such studies for planners? Or is such information more for theoretical or academic concerns? If you prove that women spend more of their income on food than men do, does it follow that you should then pay women more? Or do you try to educate the husband about his family responsibilities? Do you need the study to do either of these things?

The income of women is an important issue, considering that even in the modern sector activities in the U.S. women make only 59¢ to a male dollar. Despite legal requirements of equal pay for equal work, women around the world find that occupational segregation, if not wage discrimination, keeps women underpaid in jobs at the bottom of the economic status ladder.

### Women's Work Substitutes for Money

In a subsistence society most of the work done by the family is to provide themselves with food, clothes, and shelter. A man or woman planting a neighbor's grain, however, might receive money, for exchange labor or payment in kind is rapidly disappearing under the pressure of a monetized society. Previously such non-monetarily rewarded work would have slipped through the statisticians' net in most countries as does much family farm labor now. Processing food, fetching water or firewood, or weaving cloth is even less likely to be reflected in national budgets until the rice is milled by a machine, water is piped to the home, kerosene is purchased, or ready-made clothes bought. Economists have assumed until recently that modernization would in fact pull most people into the web of the modern marketplace where such basics are bought and sold. The energy crisis has pushed up the cost of commercial milling, pumping, and weaving, and made kerosene inaccessible to many poor, thereby pushing women back into the drudgery associated with this income-substituting work. Until women are relieved of these time-consuming activities, however, they have no time or energy to devote to activities with a greater return that might help break the cycle of poverty. Care must be taken to relieve women's time burden rather than adding to it. Technologies which consume little or no fossil fuel are being tested for use in food processing and water pumping; fast growing trees and bushes are being introduced to provide fuel.

### Women Work a Double Day

Almost everywhere women provide the services and love which define the household. Women cook, wash, clean all their lives and look after children

for a good part of it. These household activities are usually done in addition to income-generating work, providing a double loaded work day for women. American and French feminists have tried to put an economic value on housework. The one agreed conclusion is that the economic cost of paying for a woman's household services is so high that no one can afford it. In Sweden, men as well as women are given maternity leave and, theoretically, all household tasks are shared. This seems a more realistic response than putting a price tag on every activity. What is the value of playing with a child, arranging flowers, or visiting with an elderly aunt?

The existence of the double-day provides much of the rationale for lower wages in both the formal and informal sectors: women only work for pin money; women cannot take full administrative responsibility if they have children at home; women employees cost more if baby-sitting must be provided. Demands by groups worldwide for equal employment opportunities for women move quickly to demands for special childcare facilities. In the U.S., decades of special legislation for women which governs hours, places of work, or times of employment, has been interpreted by modern feminists as counterproductive today: special provisions inhibit women's equality. Therefore, if women with children want or need to work, childcare facilities must be seen as a societal, not just an employment issue.

As studies in several centralized socialist states have shown, childcare centers alone do not guarantee equal pay or equal opportunities. Nor do they relieve women of childcare or household chores after work is over. It is clear that the double-day activities of women must be shared or simplified. Another aspect of the issue is the rise in female employment in the U.S. accompanied by an increase in the number of meals eaten away

from home. In China, city streets are lined with food stalls which provide similar alternatives to cooking for women there. On the other hand, long food-lines and the lack of affordable pre-cooked food makes meal preparation a major chore in the U.S.S.R. The time-consuming duties of women outside the place of work is certainly one major cause of the declining birthrates and high death rates in the Soviet Union; their policy makers have ignored the facts of the double-day.

#### Employment at Mid-Decade

The major response of women around the world, to the concept of integrating women in development, has been to assert that women work, but that increasingly they need money. If modernization has undercut women's traditional economic activities, then alternative income-generating activities must be provided. Credit for small market or industrial activities becomes crucial, for in most places women have no rights to land and to harvest products, even where they are the primary farmworker. Accounting and market procedures must be taught to women; even traditional market women need help filling out governmental forms. Poor women are usually illiterate for education priorities usually include elites and men first.

The Mid-Decade Conference emphasized three sectors of particular need for women: employment, health, and education. Many argue that money is the crucial need: poor health is improved with good food, and education is a luxury in a sixteen-hour day spent barely surviving. Yet only in 1980 did the Agency for International Development set up a section on employment; the World Bank still does not list such an office. This neglect was probably due to the assumption that employment meant modern

sector work in industries or bureaucracies; small shops, trading, marketing or restaurants were considered too small for the national planners to notice. Because women are more likely than men to find a livelihood in this sector, small-scale employment has become a woman's issue and in many ways the predominant issue of the 70s.

Industrial employment by multinational companies in the rapidly modernizing countries is another growing issue. Young women employed in modern electronic or textile plants may work fewer hours than they did on the farm and will certainly be paid higher wages. But is the rural sector the right comparison? What happens to these young workers after a few years? Most are encouraged or forced to leave when they marry. Others, such as or including electronics workers who put in too many hours looking through a microscope, must leave when they lose their eyesight. Since such industry relies on the existence of an excess of semi-educated women workers, the problem is not likely to reach Africa in the near future. Domestic industry reflects many of the same dilemmas, however, and thus will be of concern to many urban women in Africa.

#### Programming Strategies

Since its inception, development planning has emphasized economic activity and measured its success in GNP. It is little wonder that women's response is being left out of development was to demand economic rights and to propose income-generating programs. The credibility of women's demands was enhanced by criticisms within the development community itself about the inability of development to provide basic needs to the poor in developing countries. There have been extensive discussions about what constitutes basic needs. Nevertheless, the difficulties of measuring

education or health, much less art or beauty, have resulted in an emphasis on programs to enhance income activities.

### Women-Only Projects

The easiest and quickest response to demands for programs reaching women has been to set up women's projects. Often these projects were run by local women's groups with funds flowing through international, non-governmental (NGO) or women's organizations. At their best, such programs have had dramatic impacts on the lives of women and have provided invaluable leadership training to local women. The mabati effort in Kenya brought both tin roofs and economic independence to many women; a beer making project improved women's income in Upper Volta; a cooperative dairy allowed women in India to earn money for their cow's milk. Yet the surfeit of vegetables, pork and chicken pouring into Nairobi undercut the market for the mabati women; a government-supported brewery destroyed the market for homemade beer; selling milk has reduced the nutritional level of their children while not significantly changing women's position in the Indian communities.

The problems resulted from the treatment of women's projects as separate entities in development planning. Often the economic validity of the programs was not tested on the grounds that they were actually welfare projects, because the projects were so isolated that central planners did not even know about them. Administering projects through NGOs raises the issue of communication; when the NGOs are women's groups which lack network ties to governmental ministries, the distance between planners and administrators is exacerbated. Finally, women-only projects are invariably small because funds are channeled to "more important" projects.

For the 1980s, then, women should focus their efforts on integrating women into development programming. The projects mentioned above should have been part of rural development programs, with beneficiaries clearly identified and economic implications carefully analyzed. Women should also insist that all development planning consider the differential impact on women and on men, especially projects with major funding.

Energy, for example, is currently a high priority sector. At the community level the solutions to the energy crisis are sought through improved cookstoves and the planting of community forests. If women are not involved in these projects or in formulating alternatives, the solutions are not likely to succeed. Similarly, worldwide programs to bring clean water to all by the year 1990 must necessarily entail participation of women at the community level.

Women's groups and women in planning positions may be needed as a link between such village women and the male programmers. Too often technologies to alleviate human energy are introduced only to men because yet another stereotype disassociates women from technology. When men are given the control of new technologies which replace women's traditional work, men gain at the expense of women. This has been the root of much of the negative impact on women of development and must be prevented from continuing with the implementation of new energy or water projects.

Once the role of women is recognized in these projects, special provisions to reach women will probably be needed. Women's organizations may well be the best method for contacting local women or delivering services. Working with planners has the added advantage of redirecting project results back into the planning procedure. While women-only projects are generally marginal

and peripheral, integrated projects, on the other hand, disaggregate women in order to implement the project but keep women's needs in the mainstream both for funding and planning purposes. This strategy requires careful planning and strong local leadership. Otherwise, integrated programs could easily fall back into the earlier pattern where women were ignored altogether. Thus, women-only projects will still be needed in many places in order to develop self-confident leadership and to test out project ideas. Even then, such projects should be set within the overall development context more carefully than has often been the case with earlier projects.

One reason given for the adverse impact which development has had on women is the lack of women in decision-making positions. Women in high positions are more likely to be sensitive to women's issues and receptive to women's organizations. Yet even in professions, such as health, where women dominate, decision-makers are largely male. Particularly in health, there is a close relationship between the provider and the quality of the service delivered. Traditional birth attendants have always been women, while village healers have been both male and female. Efforts are being made to upgrade such traditional health providers as part of the push for primary health care in the Health 2000 plan of the World Health Organization. In many countries, however, as the village health worker becomes a regular job, it also becomes a male job. Such a trend limits women's access to health information in many countries, reducing, rather than enhancing, the health provision for women and children. On the other hand, if village health workers are female and so reach village women, the entire family including the men will benefit.

An important strategy for the 80s is to stress the programmatic implications of women as decision-makers which involves an equity argument as well. Too often male planners see this as "exporting women's lib." They perceive demands for equal employment opportunities in the service of their own country or in international bodies as a direct threat to their own male employment. Apprehension on the part of men may undermine programmatic efforts as well as employment goals. It should be an important aspect of the 70s strategies to distinguish between women-in-development goals of program planning and women's rights for employment.

#### Influencing Planners

For many years the only place where women could meet in the U.N. was the Status of Women's Commission. Over the years this Commission has produced numerous, invaluable reports and studies which are seldom read. Although this problem is not limited to U.N. reports from this body alone, other U.N. documents do find their way to reporters more often. The women's network in publishing is weak. It is even weaker on influencing policy.

Instead of targeting efforts on politically powerful meetings such as those framing the new International Development Strategy (IDS) for the Third Development Decade, most women's groups put their funds and time into preparation for the Mid-Decade Conference. In fact, the IDS has included reference to women in seven of its 180 articles. Nevertheless, the atmosphere in the room during the IDS debate was heavy with sexual innuendos, hardly a promising indication of women's issues taken seriously. The women at Copenhagen argued that women are political beings and so a conference on women's issues alone was unrealistic. But where were they in the political conferences?

Women's issues, as we have argued above, must be set in their context as part of larger development plans. Again, it is essential that women take their concerns to meetings where the context is discussed nationally, internationally or professionally. The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization holds regional meetings every year on topics ranging from community forestry to food processing. Where are the women's organizations at these meetings? Energy for household use is of central concern to women. Where are the women at the rounds of meetings being held in preparation for the U.N. Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy? The Society for International Development will hold its twenty-five year conference in 1982; where are women's issues on the program? The presence of a few determined women at each of these meetings is certain to have a greater impact on program implementation and policy formation than more women-only world conferences, meetings or panels, however well planned.

Within national bureaucracies women have pressed for "women's machinery." Such a center is invaluable both as a resource and as a constant source of pressure on the government. But like women's projects, these offices tend to be understaffed, particularly with respect to the expectations placed on them by outside groups. Women need to help such offices by seeking out bureaucrats themselves. For instance, they must urge the health ministry to insist on training medical students in the needs of poor women, or demand regulations on credit be changed to allow women's groups some access. An essential strategy for the 80s is to take women's issues out into the male world, and insist upon being heard.

If the thrust of programming and information flow is to be on integrated planning and integrated meetings, this does not mean that networking functions

among women cease to be important. Indeed, as we take on greater roles, we may need the support of women all the more. Thus, international women-only conferences may still be useful as occasions to meet and draw strength from each other; to exchange information and ideas. However, the more that women's issues become central to development, and the more decision-making positions women hold, the less any highly publicized conference is likely to produce unanimity on women's issues. Women are citizens first. Such a realization has led me to question the utility of yet another highly publicized women's conference. If politics is the name of the game to be played let it be a political conference with high-level decision-makers-- who will still be mostly male. If it is to be a women's networking meeting, then the questions and concerns should be focused on what women can learn from each other about possible strategies within particular political settings to help women achieve equity in development.

#### Shifts in Strategies

I have argued that for the 80s, women-in-development efforts need to shift the emphasis of the strategies which worked quite admirably in the 70s. Such a shift is in response to the growing strength of support for the basic philosophy, and for greater information about women's roles and responsibilities worldwide. Essentially, I am advocating that women get out of the libraries or women's groups into the political fray; that at the village level, intervention not research be practiced; that development projects be integrated, not kept women-only. We do need more research--so collect data as you test solutions. We do need women's networking, but stop putting all our resources into one meeting every five years.

Such suggestions are geared to the current context of development planning. Throughout the decade, the thrust of women-in-development efforts has

been to prove the essential and unique characteristics of women's work. These distinctions include: (1) access to livelihood which has often been undermined by development; (2) access to money both for personal and family needs; (3) differential use of money by women components; (4) long hours at a variety of essential tasks such as income-generation, income substitution, and household support. These verities require that women have equal access to and equal pay for jobs in all sectors. The double-day issues of childcare and household duties are considered a problem, but are seldom really addressed. We are saying that women agree with men in granting the highest value to working for money. Do we believe that? Is childcare simply a case of paying for someone to take the child off our hands? What happened to the idea of home as a warm haven of love? Do we really want to run cost-benefit analyses to pricetag the planting of a rose?

Women have been justly angry at having their economic activities ignored or bypassed. In an effort to focus attention on this problem, we have erred in attributing all status and power to economic activity. In doing so, we are adopting a male measure, for men can and do dismiss childcare and household responsibilities as unimportant. Indeed, the tendency of males to ignore their familial responsibilities has accelerated the trend toward women-headed households. Unless women are similarly willing to give up family, then we shall always be hampered by the double-day concept as long as we use men as the measure.

This is precisely what one group of American radical feminists has argued. They argue that living with a male inevitably results in inequality and so insist that the only solution to women's oppression is a separate or lesbian existence. Such a line of argument is consistent with the basic American philosophic tradition of individualism. No other culture has placed

so much emphasis on the ability of a person to make it on one's own. Rags to riches. Rebellling against the materialistic conformism they detected in affluent America, the counter-culture of the 60s called for "doing your own thing." American women were simply insisting that this free-spirited individual could be female as well as male. The result has been to further the irresponsibility of most Americans to their families. Nowhere else are parents so quickly discarded, are elderly so easily dismissed. Everyone seems to have rights, no one acknowledges responsibilities. This is not a model for the rest of the world, or even for most Americans.

The problem is how to put a family back together, how to give honor to the elderly without their becoming autocratic, and how to divide household tasks without the women becoming the servants. New concepts of family may be one way. Communal households are now found among bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. as well as among the counter-culture groups in rural Tennessee. Margaret Mead once suggested the need to share what will become an increasingly scarce resource: a child. As we approach the one or at most two-child family, other adults may wish to share the delights, and problems, of raising children, and so create a new type of extended family. New employment patterns may be another. As we all live longer, both men and women may wish to vary their careers with different types of jobs. The needs of the elderly to work longer, both for income and for psychological reasons, are increasingly recognized. New eating arrangements may be another way to solve these problems. Communal kitchens in rural Korea were set up in response to longer working days in the harvest and planting seasons.

All of these changes in living patterns would allow women to work alongside men, both dealing with household needs together. But they still do not address the fundamental issue of value. On the contrary, this line of thought suggests that women are merely exploited human beings who will be just like male humans once household cares are resolved, and that self-realization is primarily economic. I do not believe that money is the measure of us all. I also know that women generally, whether through biology or socialization, are more concerned with people and relationships that are most men. Is this special knowledge not as important a measure as economic or physical power?

A new strategy for the 80s, then, requires us as women to look at our several types of work and our multi-faceted responsibilities and devise a valuation based on our own sensitivities and insights. We need a construct parallel to men's, an alternate measure, a choice. Essentially, we need to not only seek a place to work, but to put work in its place.