

Unlikely Godmother

The UN and the Global Women's Movement

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The year was 1975. Thousands of women were in Mexico City at the United Nations' first-ever women's conference—the celebration of International Women's Year. Women from throughout the world agreed on many issues, such as the need for an international convention on women that would be signed by all governments. Yet there were North-South differences: women from industrial countries emphasized gender equality in the workplace and in the home, whereas women from developing countries of the South asked: How can women achieve equality when most of a nation's people—women and men both—are repressed under an apartheid system? How can women advance when their nations are subjected to global economic inequalities? A great deal has been written with differing interpretations of those discussions at the UN Conference on Women in Mexico City (Pietilä and Vickers 1990; Winslow 1995; Fraser and Tinker 2004).

This chapter discusses how women worldwide faced those and other issues, and how their actions nudged and pushed communities, countries, and global organizations. Within this discussion, I shall show how the global feminist movement is deeply rooted in women's movements around the world, not solely in Western nations, and how the UN in its turn became women's guardian and advocate, the "unlikely godmother" on whom women have depended to put forward legislation for adoption by all countries, to offer us chances to meet across national and regional borders, to open doors for us to join discussions of issues that impact our lives as farmers, independent workers, and employees, as mothers and

wives, as victims of war and agents of peace. This chapter reaches beyond the unifying definition of feminism as "the broad goal of challenging and changing women's subordination to men," to embrace women's search for social and economic justice wherever injustice is found, because women's subordination is often an element of larger subordinations such as colonialism, apartheid, and economic domination. My concept of feminism thus of necessity involves the search for justice: women's empowerment cannot be complete in an unjust society, and a just society cannot be achieved without empowering women. The ultimate goal is freedom and well-being for everyone.

The chapter traces interactions between United Nations organizations at field level and at headquarters through examples of women's tripartite coalitions of diplomats, representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and international civil servants. It describes how women's issues have been intertwined with global development issues and how, through the UN, women become knowledgeable about global issues and the stances taken on them by governments. It shows that, while the voices of individual women are sometimes heard, a critical mass is vital to sustainable change, and it illustrates how influential men help to make or break women's concerns. Women had to contest men's assumptions that governed their nations in order to get their voices heard. The policy connections they forged between women's actual lives and development issues created a profound transformation—from seeing women as objects of services to seeing them as agents of change. Thus women reframed the debate, then revised their own strategies and influenced government actions as their movement broadened and deepened. They created a revolution.

Present at the Creation

The creation of the United Nations opened opportunities for women to promote justice for themselves and their societies, and women seized them. They had learned from experiences such as ending slavery and influencing the League of Nations that they must get a "foot in the door" of a new organization. At San Francisco in 1945, four women—representing Brazil, China, the Dominican Republic, and the United States—were among the 160 delegates who signed the United Nations Charter and demanded that its preamble speak explicitly of "equal rights among men

and women” rather than “equal rights among men.” With support from forty-two NGOs present as observers, they made sure that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms was without discrimination by “race, sex, condition or creed.”

That was an auspicious start. Next there was an agenda item on women’s rights at the inaugural meeting of the UN General Assembly in London, and U.S. delegate Eleanor Roosevelt read an “Open Letter to the Women of the World” on behalf of the seventeen women delegates, urging involvement in the work of the organization. When the Commission on Human Rights was created under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC, the General Assembly committee assigned to prioritize and discuss economic and social matters), women were immediately given a subcommission on the status of women. That was not enough. They wanted a commission of their own, and they got it in 1947 even though, it is said, they had to convince the initially unwilling Roosevelt to separate it from the Commission on Human Rights that she chaired. The mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was to promote women’s rights and equality by setting standards and formulating international conventions that would change national discriminatory legislation and foster global awareness of women’s issues. Legal and political equality—the priorities of the dominant Western group—were its early emphasis.

Four Factors Interface to Create “Women and Development”

In the 1960s and 1970s, four factors interfaced to create the concept and the movement “women and development” that soon was flourishing: first, the multiplication of the numbers of newly independent UN member states, which made poverty a priority; second, the search for alternative development models to the modernization theory that had proved unsuccessful; third, mounting evidence, produced mostly by researchers, that women are central to their nations’ economic life; and, fourth, the reemergence of the women’s movement in industrial countries that led to pressure on Western governments to include women in their foreign assistance, as Sweden legislated in 1964 and the United States would do in 1973. Western women popularized the acronym WID for “women in development,” but, rich with communications technologies, they also unwittingly often overlay on developing countries inappropriate gender stereotypes of their own societies.

A turning point for women at the UN was provoked by their participation in their countries’ independence movements. When fifty-four former colonies that were home to 28 percent of the world’s people joined the UN in the 1950s and 1960s, their emergence from poverty took center stage.

As a result of that overall growth of UN membership, CSW went from six members representing developing countries in 1960, to nineteen in 1969. Many of the new delegates were lawyers, but they came out of the experience of being colonized: they were from countries where education was reserved for elites and where the Victorian ideal of women as dutiful—and silent—had taken hold. For those reasons women from the new countries brought “development” to the agenda of CSW just as their brothers and sisters brought it to other UN agendas. The CSW was soon transformed.

A revolution was stirring. Women as actors and their institutions contested men’s assumptions that were embedded in governments—of both North and South—to get their voices heard and their needs recognized. Toward this goal, momentum was building for women to have a fund of their own, and the flood of requests for support when the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), initially called the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women (VFDW), was established a few years later confirmed beyond a doubt that women received far from an appropriate amount of development resources.

What was the intellectual setting for this revolution? In the early days of development cooperation in newly independent countries, UNICEF—established to help child victims of World War II—provided maternal and child health services to women in developing countries. When asked to name their needs, however, women in Kenya in the early 1960s often said to visitors like me: “We need a small but regular income for ourselves and our children.” Those needs could finally be recognized when an economic development focus followed the independence movements of the new countries. In that context, the fledgling women and development movement promoted the point that women be seen not solely as objects of maternal and child health care but also, based on mounting research, as active agents of economic productivity on farms and in markets, and of social and political change—in other words, of development.

The research about women’s work became accepted when, for example, it was written by the widely respected agricultural economist Esther Boserup, whose landmark book *Women’s Role in Economic Development* was published in 1970, and by the United Nations Economic Commission

for Africa (ECA), whose article "Women: The Neglected Human Resources for African Development" (UNECA 1972) included the findings of research presented to African regional conferences in the previous decade. The latter made use of studies and seminar reports in Africa over the previous decade. Its opening statements were startling at the time:

The traditional role of African women in economic development is "neither evident nor even acknowledged in the modern sectors of agriculture, industry, commerce and government." The persistence of this situation seriously impedes the realization of the expressed intentions of African governments to make full use of all human resources available for purposes of development, and to place primary emphasis on rural transformation as a means of raising the levels of living of the majority of their peoples . . . women's economic role in the production and distribution of goods, while often observed, is seldom articulated or acknowledged by development planners. (UNECA 1972, 359)

Another factor contributed to the transformation from seeing women solely as objects of services to seeing them as agents of change. Gradually, the UN's community development approach—involving communities in their own development—opened many eyes to women's work: when the development experts visited farms and markets, they saw women, sometimes *only* women. The UN Economic Commission for Africa, quoted earlier, was the first UN organization to fully recognize and act on that reality. ECA held five Africa-wide seminars for women—asking their advice—and published a multicountry study of what today is called "microcredit." By the end of the 1960s "the role and participation of women in national development" was an item in its overall program.

Early in the 1960s a Swedish parliamentarian, Inga Thorsson, traveled through postcolonial Africa. She decided on the spot that Swedish foreign aid should always include programs for women and persuaded her parliament of this when she returned home in 1964. She had visited the newly established ECA and went back to persuade the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) to finance posts for women UN officers to be selected by the ECA, who would devise programs to implement the resolutions women had made at their Africa-wide seminars.

A hint of what was to come and how opportunities for women would be opened can be found in the UN's international development strategy for the second development decade—the 1970s—that stressed improve-

ment in the quality of life for all people. That emphasis replaced the idea that new countries would easily industrialize and that benefits would "trickle down" to all, a perspective typically part of "modernization" theory. For the first time, the strategy contained the phrase "the integration of women in development," inserted on the suggestion of UN staff person Gloria Scott of Jamaica, one of a small network of committed and competent women—the midwives—with whom I worked. These women were scattered throughout the United Nations organizations and would help make the UN the guardian and advocate of the global women's movement—its "unlikely godmother." Scott saw an opening and took it in 1969. Her phrase "the integration of women in development" echoed around the world and, like Boserup's book and the ECA documents, helped the movement coalesce and gain strength.

For countries long subject to colonial rule (and for socialist feminists and many African Americans in the United States), "development" was about social and economic justice. Women, previously viewed mainly as wives and mothers, needed to be recognized by development planners for what they actually were: active agents of economic productivity—farmers, merchants, and entrepreneurs. The policy connections forged between women's lives and development issues created a profound transformation that was the seed of the fledgling women and development movement. In my view, that massive transformation needs far greater recognition and celebration in women's history than it has received. For women, the economy was the entry point to broad development concerns: development became a women's issue, and women became a development issue; the first steps had been taken to give an institutional base to the concept. Those of us who were working for women and development did not realize at the time that women and the UN were creating a revolution.

Reframing the Debate

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of ideas about development proposed by the industrialized countries, the Group of 77 developing countries, and the world's women. Even in the milieu of economic turbulence over skyrocketing oil prices, debt, and subsequent economic control over the new countries by the international financial institutions—the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—the East-West conflict framed development assistance. As explained earlier, several factors strengthened

the transformation that connected women and development, including the creation of posts in the UN system, the growth of the global women's movement in civil society and the scholarship it promoted, and changing concepts of what "development" implied. The latter would open doors for women.

The relative handful of women working for women within the United Nations and its agencies gained strength through solidarity. The posts proposed by Sweden's Inga Thorsson were filled in 1971 (I filled the first one, and Daria Tesha of Tanzania the second), and the support of senior men made possible ECA's pioneering women's program, later called the African Training and Research Center for Women (ATRCW), that soon became a model for the world's regions as the first UN-sponsored institution dedicated to women and development (Snyder and Tadesse 1995). ECA's *Data Base for Discussion of the Interrelations between the Integration of Women in Development, Their Situation, and Population Factors* (1974) was the first country-by-country presentation of statistical and qualitative information on women in a world region.

Another step toward reframing the debate was the first-ever, trailblazing global meeting about women and development, held at the UN in 1972, which spread the new movement through participation of the UN regional commissions and agencies, together with government representatives. The Expert Group Meeting on Women in Economic Development attracted as its key figures the renowned Caribbean economist and Nobel laureate Sir Arthur Lewis and the respected agriculture economist and author Esther Boserup, whose book helped to create a strong constituency in donor countries (Boserup 1970).

Two new ideas soon took hold in the larger development community: (1) "basic needs" (food, housing, clothing, public transport, aided by employment and participation in decision making) and (2) overcoming "relative and absolute poverty." A World Employment Program (WEP) launched by the International Labor Organization "brought employment—and people and human needs—back to the center of development strategy" (Emmerij, Jolly, and Weiss 2001, 67). It stressed the informal economy—later called the "peoples' economy" or "off-the-books economy"—as a key source of growth in poor countries and called for the introduction of "appropriate" technologies, and education as investment in people, among other means.

Where people's basic needs and their survival strategies in agriculture and in the informal economy began to dominate both conceptual and

field-level development practice, the fledgling women and development movement seized the new emphasis: it was a near-perfect match with its grassroots concerns. Development theory and practice finally focused directly on what constituted women's work, and planners would have to close their eyes to miss the fact. Some did, of course.

Rural development soon became a major theme for women, balanced at the macro level by "national machineries"—women's bureaus and ministries, and commissions on the advancement of women; such institutions would promote and monitor at policy level the collection and interpretation of national data by sex and the flow of national resources to women. Because of their location in governments, the commissions and bureaus were believed to help give the women's movement permanence. Thanks to Swedish foresight, UNECA was ready to promote them, following their approval at an Africa regional conference (Snyder and Tadesse 1995). While those government-sponsored units would not always meet women's high and rising expectations, as UNIFEM evaluator F. Joka-Bangura says, "One gets the feeling that if they had not taken up the question of projects for women, no one else would have" (Snyder 1995, 196). The grassroots to government, micro to macro connections had begun, though that terminology was not yet in use. At UNECA, the staff of the women's program adopted those priorities because African women had set them; they sent itinerant rural development training teams to twenty-eight countries for weeklong courses and specialists on national machineries to eighteen countries for three-day workshops.

The debate on development needed more reframing because, although the second development decade strategy and the basic needs concepts of the early 1970s gave new impetus to development assistance, these approaches shared a major weakness: they did not seek to change the structure of the world economy so that its wealth would be more equitable *between* nations as well as *within* them. Devising a strategy to transform the global economy was left to the developing countries, called the Group of 77, in the UN General Assembly, which created a New International Economic Order (NIEO) proposal that was finally adopted in 1974.

UNECA's women's center hastened to weave the women's thread with the global development one, to write and discuss *The New International Economic Order: What Roles for Women?* (UNECA 1977). According to the UN's first female Under Secretary-General, Lucille Mair (Jamaica), that document was the first discussion of the world economy to come from women in a developing region (Snyder and Tadesse 1995). Its initial mea-

surement of women's labor contributions to the agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) was another first for the world's women and was the forerunner of many economic assessments today.

Regrettably, but not surprisingly, the initial Group of 77 proposal, the New International Economic Order, would never be seriously considered by the rich countries, whose new world order was ruled by "market forces." In fact, neither the second decade strategy nor the NIEO had much to say about women. Yet the struggle for ideas and power between the industrial and the newly independent countries surfaced at the UN's first-ever global conference on women, held in Mexico City in 1975 in connection with the International Women's Year. Some 7,000 women and men of varied nationalities, races, and creeds attended the conference, exchanging their views and experiences and articulating their common concerns and differences. They, too, would reframe the debate.

For women steeped in women's liberation—a phrase that had spread widely internationally in the form of the mocking shorthand of "women's lib" and was used, however inaccurately, to label the Western women's movement—what were called "women's issues" were mainly about equality between men and women. For Western women at Mexico City, equality in the home and in employment were major themes, as *The Feminine Mystique* had set out, although these delegates also supported resolutions favoring women in low-income countries, such as those about research, training, credit, and rural development. For women of newly independent countries, male-female issues could not be resolved while oppression of whole societies—both men and women—prevailed. Could women's lives be improved while apartheid kept a whole society in bondage? Or when thousands of people languished in refugee camps? Could women's formal sector employment increase while the global economic order oppressed poor countries? Global issues were women's issues for what was then called the "third world." As a delegate from the global South said: "To be equal in poverty with men is no blessing; we need development."

Institution-Building for Women and Development

Critical to the global movement is that, in effect, delegates at the Mexico City conference designated the Decade for Women, 1976–1985, as an institution-building decade. They were aware that, although networks are important, the long life of a movement will be assured when institutions

are created to backstop and promote it. As already noted, national-level women's commissions and bureaus were being established, and at the regional level there was the ECA model. Interregional and global-level institutions remained to be established, and two new UN organizations were proposed. UNIFEM (the UN Development Fund for Women, first called the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women) was set up to finance women's activities in low-income countries, and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was to engage in research and training. Two new global NGOs were also proposed: Women's World Banking for loan guarantees, and the International Women's Tribune Center for grassroots communications. Each of those institutions had its own significant effect for women's self-understanding and for issues impacting development such as poverty, race, class, and gender. In my view, neither scholars nor activists have ever properly applauded the foresight of the women who ensured the longevity of the movement they were creating by giving it that institutional strength.

I use the example of UNIFEM, which I know best, to illustrate the value of institutions. UNIFEM started to thrive as a two-pronged instrument to support women's innovative and experimental activities directly and to influence major UN funds and programs—especially at preinvestment stages—so that both women and men would be considered in all the activities they financed (today the latter is called "gender mainstreaming"). To multiply its capacities, spread its influence, and reach out to local levels, UNIFEM immediately offered to pay for two senior women's officer positions at each of the UN's regional commissions, in Asia, Africa, and Latin America/Caribbean, and, in addition, to provide each commission with \$100,000 for activities. "We never would have survived without UNIFEM," Mariam Krawczyk of the commission for Latin America and the Caribbean told us, "It was the first to open the way" (Snyder 1995, 31).

The most appropriate and effective development innovations came from sitting under a tree and listening to rural women, as I had found. Women brought about major changes in the UN development cooperation system in the late 1970s—not without lengthy discussion and debate with the entrenched establishment that focused on men as primary targets of development assistance and as decision makers and advisers on its allocation. Again, men's assumptions were contested so that women's voices were heard and their needs met. Because UNIFEM asked, "What are women doing?" and "Where are they doing it?" before providing assistance, groups such as Women and Development Unit (WAND) in the

Caribbean and grassroots groups worldwide were consulted. Two transformations in development cooperation are exemplary:

- Community-owned loan funds, rather than handouts, were provided to women's groups. While reviewing a training program the UN sponsored in Swaziland, Dumsile, a community development officer was asked: "What do the trained women need most?" Without hesitation she replied: "They need capital to start or strengthen their businesses." At UN headquarters, finance officers said it was simply impossible for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to give a loan fund to a village community: "You can pay for an expert, or a vehicle, because in time you write them off your books," they said. "But you don't want to write off a credit fund that is intended to be self-renewing!"
- Women's nongovernmental organizations were assisted directly rather than through their governments. In Barbados women's voluntary groups that today are called civil society organizations and community-based organizations needed seed money for their activities. Again, there were seemingly endless negotiations with UNDP finance officers. They explained their view that since the UN is an intergovernmental organization, money is given to government activities, not NGOs.

Acceptable formulas were finally found, and both of these strategies were adopted, eventually transforming women's possibilities for participation. Although seldom credited to UNIFEM (in fact, they have been credited to UNDP, which was used by UNIFEM to deliver financial support to countries) they were also exciting breakthroughs and milestones for overall UN development cooperation.

Following the advice of the Mexico City conference, women's long-term goals to transform oppressive laws and distribute national wealth more equitably were advanced with the acceptance in 1979 of the first human rights treaty for women, the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Known as CEDAW, it presaged the women's human rights thread of a decade later and has become a most useful tool for women to pressure their governments, despite the fact that "justice is expensive" in a poor country, as a minister pointed out.

In summary, by the end of the 1970s, the agenda had begun to be reframed as women became a development issue; development itself was a

full-fledged women's issue; women had made the UN the guardian and advocate of their global movement; and they had transformed parts of the development cooperation system to enable resource flows to women. But tensions remained between those for whom women's issues were largely gender matters and those for whom women's issues must of necessity include national and global injustices.

Consensus at Last

Even as the global movement gained strength, and perhaps because of that, the tension between North and South rocked the young worldwide women and development movement as the divisions first seen at Mexico City resurfaced with a vengeance at the UN's Copenhagen mid-decade women's conference in 1980. The battles were mainly over apartheid and Palestinian women (Winslow 1995). Again the definition of "women's issues" was split, with the North—especially the United States and Israel—holding that the conference was politicized because these societal issues were believed by the South and the Eastern European countries to impede the empowerment of women and thus be critical for women to address.

Power over the policies of poor countries gradually shifted away from them to the international financial institutions, and the UN development cooperation organizations—which focused on human well-being—lost voice. What was known as the Washington Consensus was the agreement between the World Bank, the IMF, and the U.S. Treasury on conditions developing countries must meet to obtain needed credit. Those conditions, which were set out in the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, gave priority to market economy over equity goals. Among other stringencies demanded by the IMF, spending on health and education was devastated, shifting new burdens onto women who cared for children and the elderly. Employment and basic needs goals were expunged, negating the needs of grassroots women. At this writing, those practices have mostly been reversed, but as one African woman commented to me: "We lost a generation of our young people," for whom health and education were no longer options. The 1980s were widely labeled "the lost decade," although that period was just the culmination of a lengthy process. The IMF and World Bank—technically part of the UN system but actually independent of it—had become not unlikely godmothers but evil stepmothers!

As economic globalization progressed, the playing field became more unequal as the industrial countries—in particular the United States—pursued what became known as neoliberalism, whose advocates firmly opposed public sector growth and government intervention in or control over the economy. Market forces ruled. Following the removal of national and international controls over capital, many developing states' powers were further diminished. The industrial countries now used 4 percent of their GNP for military expenditures—ten times more than they gave as official aid to the “third world.” “Issues of poverty, equity, human development, basic needs and the NIEO were shoved off the global agenda” (Snyder 1995, 23). “Development” began its slide from popularity with all but the most committed of the donor countries—such as all of Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and Canada—and the United States moved rapidly down to the bottom of that generosity list.

Redirecting the Action

Despite, or perhaps because of, the earlier conflicts and confrontations, the third global women's conference, convened by the UN in Nairobi in 1985, witnessed a maturing of the global women's movement. At Nairobi, consensus was found when women of the South were at last ready to speak more freely about male-female relationships, and women of the North, having felt the effects of economic downturn due to the sudden rise in oil prices, and having visited Kenyan women's water and tree-planting activities, saw firsthand that women's issues are not limited to gender equality and accepted at last that global factors affect women's conditions. Feminism in practice demanded a just society. New global feminist organizations, such as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and Grassroots Women Organizing Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS) were created. DAWN would later underline the significance of race, class, and nation as well as sex and would popularize the term “empowerment” (Sen and Grown 1987). The standoffs of Mexico City and confrontations of Copenhagen over what constituted “women's issues” faded into history (Snyder 1995, 24).

A historical perspective is essential. Remember that *women and development* as a field for research and action had made strong contributions to reframing the debate: women's economic contributions could no longer be overlooked. The institutions women created were charged with practi-

cal applications of those concepts—with reframing the action. UNIFEM provides an example. Like other development agencies, it had to be very flexible and seek innovative operational strategies rather than using the traditional “technical assistance” ones. Its first move had been to strengthen regional and national institutions and leadership capacities, then, having listened to women in the villages and countryside, to provide community-owned revolving loan funds and support local nongovernmental organizations.

Those actions brought to light the importance of government plans and budgets to the process of empowering women. With UNIFEM support, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) published a UN best-seller, *Women and Development Planning: Guidelines for Program and Project Planning* (Pezzullo 1983), and cooperated with its regional institute for training men and women planners “who would integrate subjects relating to women into government development plans and programs” (Snyder 1995, 192). Asia, the South Pacific, and western Asia also received funds to train national planners. Thoraya Obaid of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) explained her commission's goal “to integrate the issues of women, the needs of women, the concerns of women in the overall policies of the governments” (Snyder 1995, 192–193).

Evolving a new programming approach, UNIFEM looked at development cooperation holistically rather than as a collection of “projects”; its policy framework interwove the priorities of governments with those of women. In India, for example, Rajasthan state government selected sericulture (silk production) as appropriate to a drought-prone area to enhance family incomes. UNIFEM supported technical training for mulberry cultivation, bought silkworm-rearing equipment, and gave a revolving fund for purchasing cocoons. Once evaluated, redirected away from the classic trap of replacing food crops with cash crops, and put more firmly into the hands of the women farmers (rather than their husbands), the innovative and experimental sericulture model that had reached 500 women was adopted by the World Bank to reach thousands more. Children went to school, and whole families were better fed (Snyder 1995, 128–135).

UNIFEM's Africa Investment Plan (AIP), adopted in 1984, related the priorities of a whole geographic region with women's issues and linked government policy formation with grassroots action. For example, Africa's top priority, food and agriculture, was set out in that region's Lagos Plan

of Action 1980–2000. UNIFEM's policy framework recognized the Lagos plan and with it women's heavy engagement in food chain activities; it had already successfully assisted the transfer of food cycle technologies such as fish smokers and palm oil presses. An early focus of AIP was the then nine member countries of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC, later renamed the Southern African Development Community [SADC]), where it supported an office, a ministerial-level seminar on food security, and a series of national activities: maize-grinding cooperatives, artisanal fisheries, fruit tree planting.

In summary, within a reframed debate, and thanks in large part to women's partnership with the UN, "women and development" evolved and matured *conceptually* as regards the inclusiveness of women's issues, and *strategically* as regards the relationship between policy and action, between civil society and government, between grassroots and national levels.

Simultaneously with those evolutionary steps in reframing the debate and the action, the term "gender" emerged from Western scholars to denote that the sexual division of labor is a human construct and therefore can be changed. "Gender" clarified the social nature of many inequities between men and women, implying that the desired change in relationships was possible. It was a useful concept. Actually, *women and development* had made *gender and development* (GAD) possible, and the greater individualism of GAD would soon make *women's human rights* possible. Yet the *women and development* image was quickly tarnished by accusations from the newly minted GAD community: WID addressed women exclusively, they said, and it fostered "all those small projects" that were mainly "income generating"; it was not speaking directly to power issues. Staff of UNIFEM heard quite a bit of that and were curious that the abundant research on the gendered division of labor was overlooked and that such criticism was seldom leveled at microfinance projects valued as low as \$100 or at their male sponsors.

Analysis of the WID/GAD controversy suggests that new concepts, such as gender in this instance, can cause setbacks rather than progress unless their theoretical and practical foundations are acknowledged and made use of. Here it is also a warning signal that power struggles are part and parcel of institutional development, among feminists as others. For WID advocates, emphasis on the economy was both a giant step from maternal and child health programs to the larger realities of women's lives, and a pragmatic political strategy. Since economic growth was the primary con-

cern of newly independent countries, women seized the chance to be recognized as economic actors. For GAD advocates, an economic emphasis overlooked interpersonal relationships of power that fostered inequalities between men and women. For those men and women in major development organizations who had not understood the concept of WID, GAD sometimes offered a relief from the persistent emphasis on women and an excuse for setting aside women's issues.

Regrettably, the controversy interrupted the momentum of the programming approach. The conceptual shift from WID to GAD ought to have been seen as an evolution, but it captured the energies of many in the academic community, distracting attention from compelling contemporary issues such as economic globalization, poverty, peace, ownership of land and water, and other potential transformations that the women's movement, including its academic wing, is positioned to influence.

The Movement Broadens and Deepens

Economic globalization followed its unremitting course as the twentieth century came to a close and the twenty-first began. It was led by powerful Western governments and by multinational corporations and the international financial institutions, using the "trade, not aid" slogan of the neoliberal revolution—that promoted the market values cherished by the Washington Consensus. As power was wrenched from the borrowing governments by some of the loan conditions they had to meet, AIDS stole lives across the developing world, depleting the numbers of parents and skilled workers who sustain their nations and leaving millions of orphans to cope on their own or be inherited by relatives who already had large families or were themselves grandparents. Vicious civil and subregional wars raged across Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa: 90 percent of their casualties were said to be civilians, and the majority of them were women and children who were raped, enslaved, killed, or exiled. Yet the democracy movement gained ground, and "civil society" became a buzzword attracting donor support.

As the global women's movement evolved in this environment—often in partnership with the UN—the momentum of Nairobi and preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing energized women worldwide. Books were timed to be published before the celebration (Snyder 2000). The momentum soon carried women to

leadership of six important UN agencies—WHO (health), WFP (food), UNHCR (refugees), UNICEF (children), UNFPA (population), and UNIFEM—and a woman would become the first ever UN deputy secretary-general as women's numbers at professional levels in the UN increased. The movement broadened and deepened, opening new areas of concentration: women's human rights, economic globalization, peacemaking and peacekeeping, and grassroots organizing.

Women's Human Rights

A fresh interpretation of twentieth-century women's rights and a new and initially competing framing of the debate appeared when the slogan "women's rights are human rights" took hold, thanks largely to the ideas and hard work of the nongovernmental International Women's Tribune Center with the Center for Women's Global Leadership in preparation for the United Nations world conference on human rights in Vienna, 1993 (Peters and Wolper 1995). The campaign spread like fire as violence against women became a key issue worldwide, with an annual sixteen days of activism and a petition that gained signatures in 123 countries. Once again women selected the UN to globalize their actions. Committed to the rights-based approach earlier, UNIFEM had supported nongovernmental organizations' use of CEDAW by underwriting their capacity to monitor government commitments. Its attractive "women's rights are human rights" lapel pins appeared everywhere. In 1996 UNIFEM established a trust fund to finance actions to eliminate all forms of violence against women, and seventy countries soon benefited from it, with support of activities ranging from training police officers to producing TV sitcoms to legal support for rape survivors.

Women's human rights can easily be viewed as a component of the women/gender and development movement, expressed as "women's rights in development," and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) proposes that the two—gender/women and development, and women's human rights—converge in order to strengthen the women's movement (Kerr 2001).

Economic Globalization

In the realm of economics, the end of the twentieth century saw abundant new evidence of the devastating effects of structural adjustment programs on people's well-being—especially on education and health services. Little girls were left standing outside school doors, and health clinics had empty medicine shelves across Africa and elsewhere. The unbearable cost of debt service and repayment by poor countries to the rich stimulated movements such as 50 Years Are Enough and Jubilee 2000 in the West and the Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice worldwide. Women formally led some of these organizations and participated in these and other worldwide economic and social justice movements. Along with such collective resistance, women also actively sought new ways to survive and prosper. For example, women producers sought entry to global markets. One needs only to board planes leaving Africa to find women entrepreneurs seeking markets everywhere.

"Another world is possible," women and their male colleagues say as they fight against oil pipelines and dams they judge to be destructive to both people and their environment. Organizations like TANGO (the Tanzanian nongovernmental organization group) educate civil society organizations about the workings of the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the IMF, the U.S. Treasury, and other external organizations that drastically affect their countries and their lives, right down to the village and farm. They seek to heighten participation of developing countries in intergovernmental decision making and demand accountability from multinational corporations operating worldwide through, for example, the World Social Forum. Marjorie Mbilinyi (2001) observes, "The resistance against corporate-led globalization has been led in Africa by women and gender activists, a dynamic force which challenges the economic reform process associated with globalization and calls for an alternative development strategy" (1). Recall the definition of feminism at the beginning of this chapter, that it "of necessity involves the search for justice: women's empowerment cannot be complete in an unjust society, and a just society cannot be achieved without empowering women."

UNIFEM pioneered studies of the impacts of trade liberalization on women producers at macro and meso levels, whose findings are being used to influence trade treaty organizations such as the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) in Latin America's southern cone and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the Americas (Bakker,

1999). Their goal: to make globalization a force for good rather than for greed. Meanwhile, at country level women are finding new ways to strengthen their indigenous rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs), for example, by joining several of them in a federation, thus having a larger capital base to borrow against and avoiding the often high costs of bank loans and microcredit.

Also in the economic realm, the gender budget initiative that is ongoing in some fifty countries (and assisted by UNIFEM in half of them) improves on the earlier described national planning thrust noted in the 1980s. Macro policy as expressed in the allotment of national income is linked with financing of actions at meso and micro level to overcome poverty and its associated gender injustices by encouraging governments to apply gender analysis to the expenditure side of their national budgetary process. Gender budgeting is practiced at local government as well as national levels. It reveals constraints that challenge us to further action: Mbilinyi (2001) points out that the effectiveness of the gender budgeting effort is still constrained because it "lacks a conceptual framework to analyze global capitalism and understand globalization," and needs grounding in a "strong poor peoples' movement" (22).

Peacemaking and Peacekeeping

Global issues and women's issues can be seen again as interwoven in the 1990s' focus on peace. Women are victims of exaggerated violence during wartime. They are also activists for peace, which appears as a near-universal issue for women worldwide. A comment by Etweda Cooper of war-torn Liberia about gendered views during wartime is telling. When rebels came near their village, she said, "men were more prone to say 'Let's go . . . kill them,' and women would say 'Let's go talk to the boys'" (African Women and Peace Support Group 2004).

The turn of the century saw women's peacemaking and peacekeeping initiatives become an international issue as the Women in Black followed in the footsteps of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo of Argentina of the late 1970s. UNIFEM helped create African Women in Crisis and supported other peace networks in South Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. Its peace torch was lit by President Nelson Mandela in South Africa and carried across Africa and Asia to the Fourth World Conference

on Women at Beijing in 1995. Thanks to a woman judge from South Africa, Navanethem Pillay, rape was declared an international crime of genocide at the UN's Rwanda criminal court.

Then came women's new breakthrough and crowning achievement—penetration of the highest intergovernmental decision-making body, through passage in 2000 of the historic UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security—another thrust to help women be seen, counted, and engaged in peace processes wherever they take place—in their own countries and internationally.

Grassroots Organizing

Poor people's movements did get stronger in rural areas and in the informal economy of cities and towns in the 1990s. The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) grew to more than 600,000 rural and poor urban members, who see India's "second freedom" as the economic empowerment of poor working women. Their prescient trade union leader Ela Bhatt has long understood the need for strong poor people's movements. She says: "Organization is the answer for those who are weak economically or socially. . . . In India we have many political rights, but because the poor are still dependent on others for their livelihood, they cannot exercise those rights" (Snyder 1995, 20). Inspired by Gina Vargas, another woman of vision, the network of Peruvian rural women's organizations named for Flora Tristan (an activist of the early twentieth century) strengthens their capacities to influence local government policy. UNIFEM assisted Flora Tristan in its early years and has also assisted Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and GROOTS.

In summary, the movement broadened and deepened both intellectually and strategically as the debate was reframed and action followed: women's human rights provided a new conceptual theme, continuing economic globalization called for new strategies, peacemaking and peacekeeping became a new arena for activists, and grassroots organizations allowed peasant voices to be heard—all these with tripartite collaboration between UN, NGOs, and political leaders. But the growth of the movement threatened some traditionalists—religious fundamentalists in particular. They would organize a backlash.

Seeds of Backlash

The centerpiece of the fruitful 1990s was the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing, 1995, that marked a new level of solidarity among both government and NGO delegations and attracted some 50,000 participants. Those of us who had participated at Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, and Nairobi in 1985 found the positive evolution palpable: Beijing was the most unified and productive conference of all. As joyful and peaceful as it was, however, the conference revealed seeds of backlash against women's advancement: religious fundamentalists discovered and acknowledged the importance of the UN, then used it as a vehicle to turn back gains made by the world's women over decades. Representatives of the Vatican and of Muslim and Christian fundamentalists joined hands. Women were sharply reminded that they were not exempt from entanglement in global political issues—a fact first discovered in Mexico in 1975 but not previously experienced personally by the new generation who participated at Beijing.

The millennium thus brought new, seemingly insurmountable challenges. Women were paying the price of success: a millennium backlash. The outspoken UN human rights commissioner Mary Robinson was denied a second term, and women's influence waned as they lost power in the UN Secretariat. "It's not the same in the UN as the 1980s when you and I were active," one diplomat explained. Only two women would remain as heads of major organizations in the early 2000s. The "era of women leaders in the UN . . . , if glorious, was also brief" (Crossette 2002).

The New Millennium: The Unfinished Revolution

Viewed from the historic perspective and as a social revolution, the women/gender and development movement, including its recent human rights thread, has made extraordinary progress. A brief four decades ago, developers saw women in their domestic roles only, as objects of services. Today women are seen as farmers, merchants, and entrepreneurs, as sole sustainers of nearly a third of the world's families, and as competent participants in public life as agents of change. Today, some sit at peace tables, redesign national budgets, and propose new international trade regimes. The continuity is clear: one phase of the movement enables the next, and the issues of each are tightly interwoven with global development issues.

Over the decades, *women and development* generated masses of research, information, and sex-disaggregated data (Snyder, 2000), rewrote much of colonial history, raised widespread awareness of women's hefty contribution to economic growth and its distribution, leveraged a flow of major multi- and bilateral development resources to women, helped women strengthen their organizations and build new local and cross-border ones, stimulated moves to elect more women to national and local offices, and helped foster worldwide networks and trade unions among scholars and practitioners. Yes, women and development had—and has—weaknesses (only dishonesty can claim no failures), but there can be no question that it reframed the debate: it made development a women's issue and women a development issue; it made women's issues global issues and global issues women's issues.

This strong growth of the twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century women's movements in different parts of the world was in large part made possible by co-opting the UN as their unlikely godmother, using the power of its blessing to influence the policies and programs of major global and national institutions and to build new institutions to sustain the movement women were creating. UNIFEM, the International Women's Tribune Center, Women's World Banking, programs of the UN regional commissions, and specialized UN agencies all helped create a new multistrand global women's movement, with the UN as its unlikely godmother. What woman leader has not used one or several of these institutions? Through them, activists have been able not only to pursue women-specific goals but also to examine the larger society for evidence of and to take action on institutional racism, sexism, gender, class, war, and other injustices. And, aided by the communications revolution, they have used this infrastructure to forge worldwide networks.

In addition, as Marilyn Porter, scholar and activist, says, "There is no doubt about the importance of activity around the UN in the formation of an entire generation of feminist activists from around the world . . . the conferences and related activity have introduced large numbers of women from around the world to each other and each other's concerns and ideas and to the excitement of working with women from different backgrounds on common issues" (in Porter and Judd 1999, 8). For those working within the UN, the way has not always been smooth. Despite widespread support of our institutions by many male leaders, some powerful ones tried to undermine them. Women had to contest men's assumptions to get their voices heard. I have vivid memories of how both the

African women's center and UNIFEM escaped such victimization and eventual demise only through the creative efforts of their staff, political supporters, and NGOs. One instance stands out: a very senior UNDP officer, after learning of UNIFEM's development of conceptual frameworks such as the Africa Investment Plan in order to base its investments on regional priorities, told astonished UNIFEM managers: "You are not supposed to conceptualize!" We were reminded of colonials trying to suppress intellectual life among the colonized. The words of Ingrid Palmer, whose observations on women's issues internationally are widely respected, still ring true for some mainstream organizations: "There is an evident intellectual inability to cope with women's issues" (United Nations 1980).

Other obstacles arose from women's own pursuits, such as the rush to "engender the mainstream" that was invested with too much promise and led some of us to neglect or even disparage women-specific institutions that have been and still are the font of ideas and innovative actions and a source of our collective strength. Like the 1970s slogan "Integration of women in development," some women saw "the mainstream" as the only important place to be, in effect denying the value of their own organizations.

Political encounters also took their toll: the U.S. government's voluntary contributions to UNIFEM ceased for two years, then resumed at a lower level following the controversial 1980 Copenhagen conference. UNIFEM was scapegoated as guilty by its association with the United Nations and falsely accused of financing the UN-sponsored conference. In fact, as a special fund, UNIFEM's resources were allocated solely to development activities in low-income countries, and the conference was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), among others (Snyder 1995). Since that time, American women have never pressed hard for a government contribution for women globally through UNIFEM commensurate with the needs: as recently as 2001, using population figures together with voluntary, non-earmarked contributions of governments in dollars to UNIFEM, every Dutch person gave twenty-five cents to UNIFEM, every Norwegian gave forty-five cents, and it took two Americans to give just one cent! For well over a decade, the United States gave a miserly \$1 million or less a year for the world's poor women through UNIFEM.

Our unfinished revolution also confronts well-organized opposition at the dawn of the millennium: the intransigence of fundamentalists of all beliefs, some of whom have a hold on government votes and UN discus-

sions. Fundamentalists, too, are globalizing. Their power grows and threatens women's hard-won gains; at this writing they remain formidable adversaries.

As women/gender and development evolved, its meaning and the means to attain it have increasingly been defined, broadened, and enriched by its primary stakeholders—women of developing countries, many of whom are young and proficient users of new information and communication technologies and some of whom refuse, for political reasons, to identify themselves as "feminist," although they are fully committed to the women's cause. They illustrate our definition of feminism as the broad goal of challenging and changing women's subordination to men, while simultaneously searching for social and economic justice, because women's empowerment cannot be complete in an unjust society, and a just society cannot be achieved without empowering women.

A number of women's organizations in the North have lost momentum. Perhaps younger women are not fully aware of the struggles undergone in gaining ground, and so just take it for granted; perhaps they are resting on their impressive achievements in the workplace and the home; or perhaps they have not viewed equality for women as the *interim* goal, and justice for all people as the *long-term* one.

In Finland, for example, the women-friendly welfare society has integrated women into male society to the extent that many seem to consider the struggle to be over. Reality reveals otherwise, as economic globalization erodes years of the benefits bestowed by their welfare society (Pietilä 2002). It appears that they failed to foresee the impact that neoliberal practices such as "free trade" would have on people's freedom and well-being, and how such approaches could reverse human security.

This history tells us that Finnish women are not alone in failing to foresee the impact that neoliberal practices would have on people's freedom and well-being and on the vigor of their own organizations. As women and their NGOs put their energies into larger issues such as the environment, population, militarism, and peace, "pure" feminism lost the broad appeal it had earlier. In Europe, by the 1990s it was "impossible to organize large numbers of women" (Harcourt 1994, 194).

In North America, the U.S. women's movement has long hesitated to identify with and support the global women's movement. Why? Women in the United States have "a peculiar set of blinders," says Linda Tarr-Whelan (2003), that separates their interests from those of women worldwide: the U.S. government's failure to ratify the CEDAW and its miserly contribu-

tion to UNIFEM express this distance eloquently. "What's in it for us?" these women seem to ask, and many Americans ask of the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto environmental accords, and other multilateral conventions and treaties.

For me, those lessons reinforce the principle set out by southern delegations long ago in Mexico City in 1975, that macropolitical and economic issues must indeed be women's issues. Global issues are women's issues, and the two are interwoven as threads in a fabric. Yesterday there was apartheid; today there are fundamentalism, militarism, and greedy forms of globalization. A feminism that fails to include these broad issues that inhibit the empowerment of both women and men is incomplete and denies its own potential.

In conclusion, despite differences among areas, countries, and regions, a global women's movement does exist, thanks in large part to its unlikely godmother, and to the tripartite coalitions of UN civil servants, NGOs, and diplomats that made its adoption effective. Possessing a rich experience, those in this movement know that gender equality cannot be achieved and maintained separately from other major social, economic, and political issues, and that gender equality is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for people's freedom and well-being—for development. Today, concern with global issues is critical to the relevance and even the survival of the women's movement. Where national feminist goals are mainly gender equity, the movement appears to lose momentum, and social protections erode. Global women's movement activists know that in the North, we must fight injustice in our own societies and governments and in their relationships with poor countries, not just fight for justice in other peoples' societies and governments in the South.

Today, the women's movement is strongest in the global South, but that vitality is threatened by the lagging energies and low mobilization of the women's movement in the global North. Happily, signs of a resurgence of women's leadership in the North are visible, for example, in antiwar and debt-cancellation campaigns; I believe it is needed far more widely and must be representative of a broad spectrum of classes. Feminism is about human beings; we say, it is about justice for everyone.

Our revolution is unfinished, but our effect on the entrenched structures of the privileged and still male-led world can draw sustenance from history and from the actions of poor contemporary women. By protesting multinational companies' destruction of the environment and just one global corporation's failure to share oil earnings with local communities

so that their own land can give them food, shelter, jobs, education, and health services, 2,000 Nigerian village women of the oil delta conspired to test the conscience of the rich, corporate-led world and of their own government (IRIN-WA 2002). They are telling us about justice for everyone. Do we dare listen?

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The Evolution of Transnational Feminisms *Consensus, Conflict, and New Dynamics*

Aili Mari Tripp

In the past two decades, we have witnessed the evolution of an international consensus around particular norms regarding women's rights. This rights-based consensus combines development and human rights interests, engages advocates within and outside transnational women's groups, and has been very much a product of global dialogue and interaction. Much of this consensus has been reflected in the various international agreements and treaties, including the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the 1995 United Nations Beijing Platform of Action, the 1996 International Labour Organisation Convention on Homeworkers, the 1999 UN Jomtien resolution on Education for All, and the 2000 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on the participation of women in peace-building. These and other international decisions indicate increasing international recognition of women's rights and interest in changing women's status and removing key impediments to women's advancement in almost every arena.

The impetus in these international forums has been truly transnational, with non-Western and Western countries alike contributing to the growth of this consensus. The consensus represents an important convergence of feminisms and women's rights advocacy worldwide. Regardless of the common perception in the West that ideas regarding the emancipation of women have spread from the West outward into other parts of the world, this chapter argues that, in fact, the influences have always been multidirectional, and that the current consensus is a product of parallel feminist