

The Emergency of Women and Gender in the Development Debate up to 2000: An Overview

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ABSTRACT The aim of this paper is to trace the emergency of women and gender as key issues in the development debate from the 1960s to 2000. It discusses the basic factors namely the domestic role, economic role, new political role and social movements and the part played by feminism that underlie the emergence of women and gender as key issues in the development debate. The tracing is done along decades namely the first development decade (1960–1970); the second UN decade for women (1975–1985); the Beijing conference of September 1995 and the G.A. Special Session 2000 as important milestones towards the emergence of women and gender as key issues in the development debate.

INTRODUCTION

Tracing the development of gender as an issue in development is no easy task. There are interwoven basic factors, the need to study the origins of this titanic wave of the rise of women, the use of the thematic approach singling out central ideas in the rise of women and gender in development, the use of the chronological approach (temporal perspective) focusing on relevant gender decades and international conferences. The use of the monumental approach focusing on influential figures has not been exhaustive but limited to Ester Boserup.

Basic Factors

There are basically four factors contributing the emergence of women and gender as key issues in the development debate. These are so interwoven that addressing them one by one is artificial and does undermine their impact in this work.

The New Domestic Role Factor: The widespread introduction of the birth control pill (contraception) in the 1960s enabled women to control their own fertility. This was a decisive change occurring in the private sphere of women's lives during that century (Kaplan 1992). It gave women an effective measure of control over their bodies and their reproductive potential for the first time in history. This allowed women to choose when to have children and opened them

to varieties of life styles (Walsh 1980). Further this development ensured women spent less time on rearing children, had fewer children in a shorter a period of time and they had more economically productive years to be spent in paid labour. There was also an upsurge in the number of employed women participation worldwide. Such developments changed women's domestic role traditionally known to be situated solely within the private sphere particularly the home. This led to a new economic role for women.

The New Economic Role Factor: During 1960–1980s, historically unprecedented numbers of married women in their prime child-rearing years with husbands present and employed, entered the workforce thus engaging in the revolutionary new work behaviour (Van Horn 1988). Entry into labour market by women marked a breakthrough towards the rise of women and gender in society in general. It was not long before they demanded equality in the way they are viewed compared to men.

The New Political Role Factor: Domestic and economic role factors occurred amidst new political waves. The change in women's status in industrialized countries is indebted to the existence of parliamentary democracies (Kaplan 1992). Democratic governments allow for the rule by majority consent, and thus implicitly allow for dissent from minority lobbies, including women. It is therefore clear that in this view or political context, women movements were given the space and environment in which to develop and lobby for change.

During the beginning of the nineteenth century women protested against legal and political injustices in Western Europe, Northern America and Australia successfully in a formal sense. Women in these countries obtained full rights of citizenship and became formally equal before the law. Gender equality became aligned to human rights and was bolstered by specific legislation (Kelly 1989; Wilson 1989). Social transformation also saw the socio-political status of women reviewed and amended. Whilst women worldwide did not storm into the political arena in large numbers, the political rights they were provided with allowed those in western democracies with the means to organize themselves and place women's issues on national political agendas.

Social Movements: In the context of democracy, social movements embracing issues of women's rights played a cardinal role in improving the status of women. Various stages in history have been marked by women's activities, although in historical terms, the first wave of an international women's movement only began in the late nineteenth century when access to education, the working conditions of women and the franchise became priority issues to be addressed (Clabaugh 1986). A second movement emerged in the wake of the heightened awareness concerning human rights following World War II. The Civil Rights movements in the USA which culminated in the passing of Civil Rights in the 1960s were followed by similar legislation in several Western European countries (Kaplan 1992). The widening varieties of sectors in which women could be engaged for economic purposes in times of high discrimination is a partial result of the new domestic role in the 1950s and 1960s, added to women's growing awareness of and impatience with gender inequalities (Kaplan 1992). Consequently civil rights legislation was further amended to address specific women and gender issues in employment in most Western Countries. These four basic factors continued to shape gender and women's issues in all aspects of women's lives up to today. It is worth mentioning that development came to include women and gender gradually placing it at the center.

The First Development Decade 1960-1970

The decade marked the highest level of colonialism, when developing nations being

depleted of their natural resources at an alarming rate either in the form of direct imports to developed nations, or as raw materials for production of potentially exportable commodities (Anand 1983). The development strategy in the 1960s concerned itself with increased food production to meet increasing population growth. Technological revolutions such as the Green Revolution did not solve food shortages and population control programs. For example, the birth control pill did not stop population increase and was not fully understood by experts (Anand 1983). These factors only worsened the condition of women although the birth control pill's advantage for women was noted. However, the increasing militancy of the developing nations influenced a more palatable form of development characterized by new concepts such as "basic human needs", "meeting the needs of the poorest of the poor", growth with equity" (Anand 1983). Women working on development issues suffered the same fate as women in general as they were considered marginal to the process of the highly intellectual development debate.

In the early 1970s several European and North American women began advancing the concept of "integrating women into development". Their work pointed out that development had actually harmed women and that many women in developing countries were worse off than before. More studies were conducted by social scientist, political scientists, and other academicians, confirming these findings (Anand 1983). Generally the 1960s saw a few conferences on development issues and the involvement of the women in the development process, albeit rather tangentially whilst in the field, development projects had already begun special programs to "involve women in development" by the early 1970s (Roodkowsky 1983).

Another indicator of the emergence of women and gender as key issues in the development debate was noted in the Economic Commission for the United Nations March 1969 meeting, focusing specifically on how women could take part in the development of their home countries. It was followed by more specific meetings in Rabat (Morocco) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) during the next two years. By 1973-74 a number of action programs sponsored by the ECA had begun, especially in home economics and other traditional "women's" fields (Roodkowsky 1983). Concurrently with these developments there was an

increase in the effects of development trends on women in the United Nations. As early as 1948, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was accepted by the UN General Assembly and aimed at reaffirming a universal trust in fundamental human rights, human dignity and equal rights for all. Further the Declaration transformed the ideas of equality, non-discrimination and freedom to the universal level, to be applied in all political systems (Eides 1991).

The 1950s and 1960s continued to experience a rise in the recognition of women and how they affected by development in the United Nations. One may note that at that stage human rights had more to do with women's issues in development, until the UN conventions on women was passed in 1951. Women who had taken part in the liberation of nations from colonialism in Africa voluntarily joined men in nation building efforts as in the case of women in East Africa led by Margaret Kenyatta (Reddock 2000: 33). Gradually several nations began to put laws enabling equal remuneration for both gender for work of equal value. 1952 witnessed the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. 1972 saw a group of women non-governmental organizations suggesting that 1972 be called Themes of Equality, Development and Peace. Thus it became apparent that women and gender were becoming indispensable issues in any development debate. Perhaps another aspect worth focusing on because of the period it appears in our trace of this emergence of women and gender in the development debate, is the work of Boserup (1970).

Boserup Ester's Work/Publication

Ester Boserup's book *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970) is one of the most important pioneering works on women and development, giving impetus to the emergence of women and gender as a key issue in the development debate. The book documented and discussed the negative impact of the development process on women by showing how colonialism with its forms of modernization demeaned women's status as new patterns in trade, farming favoured men by carrying such inequalities into the new industrial and urban sectors. Roodkowsky (1983) Boserup argued convincingly that the recruitment of women into the modern sector helped accelerates economic growth, a view that

contracted assumptions held by many bureaucrats who assumed women at work necessarily replace men (Tinker 1990). The researcher's work was a first step towards rectifying problems that were associated with the reflection on particular problems of women in literature on economic development, through its own analysis and served as conversation for numerous further works and projects (Roodkowsky 1983). It may be argued that the work launched the field of women in development with a revolutionary thrust so much so that it changed society's perception of the part women play in the economy. Another major contribution is that it justified the need for gender inclusive redistribution of productive resources and influencing the need for policy changes in the political and economic domains (Jaquette 1990).

Within literary circles, the work influenced new perceptions of the world in scholars and advocates, whilst policy makers and development practitioners and professionals remarked that a new era had emerged for development (Tinker 1990). Within the development donor fraternity efforts towards gender inclusion in development issues were revamped (Tinker 1983, 1990). It may be again said that Boserup popularized the understanding that if women's working creates diversity in development and that exclusion of women resultantly denied them the benefits of development, as well as undermined development itself. Further an awareness of the need to train and skill women for economic participation in the modern sector became clearer in society (Roodkowsky 1983). It may be mentioned here that whilst she argued that women are entitled to a share of development resources and are not less productive as commonly believed (Jaquette 1990). It may also be argued that Boserup's work indicted Western led development of undermining the status and economic opportunities of women and further argued for the application of justice and efficiency in gender issues (Tinker 1990; Turner and Fischer-Kowalski 2010).

It may be concluded that Boserup's work greatly influenced society's perceptions of women taking into account the economic role of women that had been down played and underestimated. The researcher will revisit Boserup's work in the section that traces the emergence of women and gender in development through feminism. It is fair to end this section by stating the Ester Boserup (1970) was an effective path-

breaker in influencing women and gender as key issues in the development debate. One reason why the writer has chosen to deal with Boserup here is that the work falls at the end of the first development decade, but appreciates that its impact goes beyond that time in ensuring that women and gender became key issues in the development debate.

The Second UN Decade for Women 1975-1985

Ravaz and Miller (1995) point out that the 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City, and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), considered main global concerns of women such as the need to enhance educational and employment opportunities; ensuring their equality in political and social participation; and ensuring enhanced health and welfare services. Kapoor and Sandler (1995) note that participants hoped continued economic growth would lead to development for all. It may be pointed out at this juncture that the Women in Development (WID) movement at that time prioritised and demanded social justice and equity for all women (Ravaz and Miller 1995). Several factors in the second UN decade for women (1975-1985) continued to give impetus and propelled women and gender as key issues in the development debate. The protests of the sixties and seventies fuelled the gender and women's movements. The South protested against injustices of the economic order. The North was concerned about race, and class privileges in universities and factories. Civil-rights, black-power movements and Third World liberation struggles exposed prevailing forms of neo-colonialism across the global landscape (Kabeer 1994). Arguably Women's movements challenged the social practices that were pre-designed to ensure the male gender had all the privileges in the economy, academy, and politics and in everyday life (Kabeer 1994).

It became so evident in this decade that the attitude that women are inferior to men was an international one and that both men and women required substantial retraining in their thinking and behaviour in that area (Anand 1983). The questioning mood that prevailed in the decade saw the conviction that the gross national product (GNP) sufficed as an adequate measure of development being dumped, as the first development decade had disapproved the "trickle

down" of economic growth (Kabeer 1994). Third World countries suffered from high unemployment, inequality and absolute poverty. Nations became fed up of growth dominated definitions of development and sought to redefine development and its goals inclusive of variables such as poverty, social and economic redistribution and basic needs (Kabeer 1994).

Literary and Research Work

Literary and research work also influenced a change in the ideological climate of development in the decade resulting in greater attention being given to women's issues (Kabeer 1994). The literary works such as by Chenery et al. (1974), World Bank (1975), International Labour Organization's (1976) were influential publications reflecting the new sensitivity to the links between economy and social objectives (Kabeer 1994). Researches on population, food, fertility and economic growth by Inkeles (1996), Mamdani (1972), and Epstein and Jackson (1977) led to the recognition of the centrality of women in matters of fertility decisions and population related decisions. There is no doubt that these studies articulated the much desired correlation between women's issues and the need to directly participate in economic development and the apparent policy implications (Kabeer 1994). The researcher sees such works as very influential in their own, although their impact did not match that of Boserup's work (1970). It is appropriate to mention that the Food and Agricultural Organization of UN (established in 1945) had a hand in this issue in the 1975-1985 UN decade for women. The FAO Nutrition Section, with majority women staff were highlighting women as a vital force in food production, especially in Africa (Kabeer 1994). Of prime importance was the World Food Conference organized in 1974 which resultantly acknowledged the central role of women in the production, processing, marketing and provision, consumption of food and nutrition in general (Kabeer 1994).

The UN Conference on population (1977) recognized the close connection between the role of women and population growth, especially with respect to the correlation between rises in women's labour force participation and education, and declines in birth rates (Roodkowsky 1983). There is no doubt then that women and gender were indeed becoming key issues in the

development decade. Those who involved women and women needs in development planning achieved minor victory in the US policy. The US's Foreign Assistance Act was amended to call for US representatives in international agencies "to encourage and promote the integration of women" into the economies of the nations involved, and into policies making positions in those organizations, thereby improving the status of women (Roodkowsky 1983). As a result "women and development" became an official part of development efforts in the US, followed up by the setting of women in development office at the US Agency for International Development, and the encouragement of special women's programs by agencies ranging from the World Bank to the non-governmental private voluntary organizations (Roodkowsky 1983). This signified the new visibility of women in development in the international arena/fora and above all represented an infusion of new ideas aimed at influencing prevailing development policy (Kabeer 1994).

The UNIFEM, Women and Gender Issues

1975 saw the emergence of the UNIFEM as part of the UN system evolving out of women's hopes and aspirations and as the voice and conscience of women within the UN (Kapoor and Sandler 1995). The task of UNIFEM was to build women's empowerment and partnerships among governments, the United Nations, and civil society. Women all over the world were calling for action; and UNIFEM aimed at bringing women's concerns onto the UN's development agendas (Kapoor and Sandler 1995). By 1985 at the end of the Decade for Women (1975-1985), there was a decision to expand the mandate of the UN fund to constitute UNIFEM. This marked a breakthrough that lead to UNIFEM being affirmed internationally as having a special role to play, in contributing to the advancement of women and that it had to be strengthened (Kapoor and Sandler 1995).

Revelations of the 1975-1985 UN Decade for Women

The decade revealed obstacles to women's progress and lessons for those interested in women and gender issues in general and in development in particular. The decade had its

achievements worthy/summarizing in this trace of the theme of women and gender in the development debate.

Achievements

The Women and Development: Forum UN (1985) gives a positive picture of 1975-1985 UN decade for women on the basis of NGO observations. These sources are likely to be more reliable than government sources, in that they may not exhibit biases.

A large number of NGOs believed one of the greatest accomplishments of the decade had been the attitudinal changes of governments elsewhere. Areas of greatest progress for women were identified as follows: Higher educational levels attained, increased economic opportunities; improved availability of health services; greater involvement in organizing efforts for peace. National NGOs believed that plans for the advancement of women were now incorporated in their country's policies. Implementation had been more difficult with 60 percent reporting that their government policies were not adequate to achieve the kind of advancement desired; more than 50 percent noted continued discrimination in inheritance and family laws, while more than 25 percent were of the opinion that present political, civil and economic policies in their countries were still discriminatory.

Obstacles to Women's Progress

The major obstacles to women's progress have been the deteriorating economic conditions which in many countries reached crisis proportion. This had negative impact on the social, economic and political participation of women. This has it pushed them to the sidelines; prevented them from acting on their behalf effectively and their experiences in emergence situations such as war: famine and drought were pathetic and unenviable (UN Development Forum 1985). Another obstacle was the lack of education and poor dissemination of information, leaving women unable to make any impact on government decision making and planning (UN Development Forum 1985). In most of the world women still suffered higher unemployment and received lower wages than men, were blocked from positions of authority; and expected to look after the home and children while still contributing to the family income (McParland 1985).

Whilst NGOs felt that there were attitudinal changes, the translation of these attitudes into action had not been uniformly successful, thus presenting the repressive traditional practices and the cultural attitudes of both men and women as an obstacle to women's progress. Traditional courts and laws that regarded women as minors to their husbands still existed. The majority of politicians and cultural leaders remained men who tended to resist legislative changes favouring modernisation women (UN Development Forum 1985). The obstacles posed a threat to the gradual rise of women and gender, as key issues to the development debate.

Lessons from the 1975-1985 UN Decade for Women

Anand (1985) summarizes lessons from the UN 1975-1985 decade for women: The lessons include aspects that include that women are different from men in their needs, desires and aspirations; they aspire more and above the home, spouses and children; only a plan of action providing a legal, institutional and attitudinal basis for change is desirable. Another lesson obtained from this decade is that changes need to happen at every level, international, national, state and local. It must also occur within individual men and women, in their relationships in and outside the home. A more striking lesson was that the attitude that women are inferior to men was an international one, and that both men and women required substantial retraining in their thinking and behaviour in this area. The cooperation between and among the UN system, national governments, NGOs and base organizations is vital to the success of the plan of action and efforts in the next decade. This was noted as desirable.

The decade also made apparent the importance of women's movements and their contribution in individual and organizational terms, to the marginal success of the decade. The decade has left women more prepared than before to fight their cause. It was learnt progress has been made in integrating women's input into the development process and a great deal more needed to be done. The emergence of a good plan of action under the themes of equality, development and peace and the sub-themes of education, health and employment are issues that were expected to possibly bring women into an equal footing with

men. It was evident in this decade that reality in and outside the home had changed, but attitudes had not, as the double day of women prevailed. Bunch and Carrillo (1990) contend that women in the West learnt that there can be no sexual equality, when economic development is lopsided. Also that peace was not possible without the development of economic justice and an end to the everyday threat of gender-based inequality and violence against women worldwide. The trio of equality, peace and development is interrelated and that all issues affecting human life are "women's issues".

These lessons reflect that there were a measurable number of achievements in this theme. These lessons set a good foundation for the next decade in efforts to bring women and gender into being an indispensable issue in the development debate.

**Feminism in the Development Debate
(1975-1985) UN Decade for Women**

Feminism is the doctrine that argues for the recognition of women's rights; the belief in the principle that women should have the same rights and opportunities (legal, political, social and economic) with men. The formative intersection between its ideas and women in development took place within the context of the UN decade for women 1976-1985 (Bunch and Carrillo 1970). Women in Development and global feminism were stronger at that time because feminism had expanded in Third World countries and its leadership had more impact on the women's movements globally (Bunch and Carrillo 1990).

In the 1980s, there was a growing trend towards seeing women as agents and beneficiaries in all sectors, at all levels of the development process. This was partly through an understanding of gender roles (Brett in Wallace and March 1991). The decade is still popularly acknowledged for the increase in women's groups such as the Isis International, Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange, International Women's Tribunal Centre (IWTC) and the Women's Features Service (India); among others (Walker 2000: 194 -196). This enabled effective networking nationally, regionally and internationally among women's groups spear-headed by the IWTC.

***Feminism: Some Views on Women,
Gender Development: Anand (1980);
Savane 1984; Antrobus***

Anand (1980) (in Bunch and Carrillo 1990) expressed a conviction in Feminism as a strong instrument in making women a strong force in society. She further stressed that it questions the artificial barriers between the political, social and economic aspects of society and how individuals relate to the orders. Savane (1984) defined feminism as a holistic ideology that embraces the whole spectrum of political, economic and social ideologies [accepting] that the oppression of women is a universal phenomenon. Almost concurring with Anand (1980) Savane (1984) (in Bunch and Carrillo 1990) expressed the view that feminism exposed and challenged the socio-political, economic and cultural ideologies legitimizing and sustaining the subordination of women. Antrobus (in Bunch and Carrillo 1990) felt feminism dealt with global issues such as equality, development and peace cutting through race, class, gender, and homophobia and resisting them all. Anand (1980 cited in Bunch and Carrillo 1990) felt that change had to be based on new theory of development embracing feminism. On the other hand feminism could be introduced in development processes and critically render development more feminist (Savane (1984 cited in Bunch and Carrillo 1990).

Antrobus felt feminism was a call for action and offered the only politics which could transform the world into a more humane place. Connell (1987) points out that feminism postulated that women's disadvantages can, in principle, be eliminated by breaking down these stereotypes: for example by giving girls better training and more varied role models, by introducing opportunity programmes and anti-discrimination legislation, or by freeing the labour market. Such a view echoed Savane's (1984) feeling that feminism and development were inseparable because the subordination of women emerges out of a dialectical relationship between culture, the economy and politics. These views by women from various regions Anand (India) Savane and Antrobus (Caribbean) were powerful statements about the need to link feminism with rethinking women and development (Bunch and Carrillo in 1990). These views, one may observe watered the questioning mood of the decade and made women and gender in development a theme no longer capable of being ignored.

Bunch and Carrillo (1990) single out the following as some of the successes of feminism in the 1975-1985 UN decade for women: Development workers and scholars looked at or returned to feminism as it became globally defined. Feminists began to address legal equality, equality on the left, violence against women, reproductive rights in relation to economics and development. The need to link, redefine the fundamental questions, concepts and approaches of society to realize justice became apparent on the part of feminists.

Connell (1987) points out that central to liberal feminism was the idea that women's disadvantages stem from stereotyped customary expectations held by men and internalized by women, and promoted through various "agencies of socialization", local movements developed in Third World countries to address regional concerns of women's lives and expand the definition of what feminism meant and could do in the future. A resounding success was that global feminism led to a dialogue between women of the North and South, about both the diversity and the commonality of women's lives and how to develop a global perspective within each of the movements on issues affecting women. There is no doubt then that feminism had an impact on the gradual emergence of women and gender as key, in the development debate during 1975-1985 UN decade for women.

Nairobi July 1985 to Beijing; September 1995

Pre-1980s saw women's issues being handled primarily in the context of human rights, confined to the commission on the status of women and the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly which dealt with social and humanitarian matters (Kabeer 1994). July 1985 saw the United Nations convening a political conference at Nairobi; Kenya. The conference discussed all the then crises in the world among others; the Middle East conflict, Apartheid in SA, the international debt crisis, Central America, the drought in Africa and the aftermath of past crises (Anand 1985). The conference also reviewed and appraised the progress achieved and obstacles encountered in attaining the goals and objectives of the previous UN decade for women (Anand 1985).

Attendees included different categories of women, government officials, delegates, observers, academics and activists. Unlike attendees

of other UN conferences, all women who attended the Nairobi Conference had contributions to make (Anand 1985). Women acknowledged similarities in their lives and pointed out differences. They reiterated that poverty was the overriding consideration for the lower status of women. They suggested that sexism was a major cause of the underdevelopment of women and must be recognized as much and be alienated. Also, others felt capitalist economies contributed immensely to the oppression of women (Anand 1985).

Strategies Set for the 1985-1995 Decade

Anand (1985) summarizes the strategies for this decade as follows:

Accent was on re-examining the current theory and practice of development. The economic crises nations were facing affected women and that women could not progress unless nations reshaped their development strategies to reduce and eliminate cycles of boom and bust, inflation and devaluation. The re-examination should pay greater attention to the role of women in economies and how their needs can be taken into account. Some strategies could be achieved by examining and developing more indigenous models of development, rather than adhering to the use of the highly industrialized, export-oriented ones in which women end up at the bottom. The decade would be expected to execute institutional changes ending the double day of women by ensuring that housework, child-rearing and income generation are shared by women and men. Women felt that unless this was shared, women cannot be true partners in development.

Non-Governmental Organizations at the Nairobi, 1985 UN conference advanced the following as priority areas for the decade at hand:

Education and consciousness raising; the promotion of economic and opportunities including education and arrangements for financing and credit for women; the promotion of women in political decision-making positions; the need to change legislation and revise social structures; paying attention to the family as an important social and economic unit and to the "value of women's work done at home" (UN Development Forum 1985).

Thus the stage had been set for all nations at Nairobi 1985 to advance the cause of women in social, economic and political spheres. The Nairobi Conference (1985) was an important step

towards or in the rise of women and gender as key issues in the development debate.

Post Nairobi 1985 Developments

By 1989 several organizations in the United Nations system responsible for ensuring that women were integrated into its development efforts had been put into place. These were the divisions of women within UN central agency, the UNDP and UNDF for women and the legal committees for the elimination of Discrimination against women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement for women- an autonomous body with the UN, the WID units within the various bodies of the UN (Kabeer 1994).

Further in 1989 the UN declared that in the 1990s the task would be to transform greater understanding of the problem of women into altered priorities, empowering women for development should have high returns in terms of increased output, greater equity and social progress (Kabeer 1994). The UN Conference post Nairobi 1985 has played a significant role in advancing women and gender issues in development. Heyzer (1995) demonstrates the UN efforts in this regard by briefly focusing on selected areas.

There is a glaring trend that in the 1990s several international organisations put women's issues at center stage. At the UN conference on Environment and Development in Rio (1992), the central role of women is attaining sustainable development was emphasized and at the World Conference on Human Rights at Vienna (1993). State representatives undertook to recognize the rights of women as human rights and took violence against women seriously. The International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) acknowledged the need to empower women as very critical in effective national population planning. At the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen (1995), the world acknowledged the centrality of gender equality for the accomplishment of productive employment, social integration and poverty eradication. This conference eventually adopted standards and directions that were to be implemented in policy planning at national, regional, and global levels (Heyzer 1995). It may therefore be gainsaid that international fora played a central role in facilitating global

acceptance and dissemination of the necessary understanding of the key roles in all spheres of human life.

Beijing, September 1995 to the Year 2000

The Agenda

The Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing 1995 marked the end of the previous decade and set the start of another. Women felt/hoped the conference had to develop a specific and realistic list of imperatives and commitments for advancing women's status and ensuring empowerment; and a forceful call as the normal workings of economic and political processes will not automatically bring about the advancement of women (Heyzer 1995).

It may be noted here that women ensured that the conference had to build on the achievements of previous UN conferences on women and make an effort to sustain the momentum by necessarily embracing the interrelated variable such as environment, human rights, population, development and women empowerment. It may be argued that the conference remains as one renowned for addressing one of the most impressive agenda in which women argued and pushed for a better and more women friendly development path in all nations. Notably women argued that the development of women across the world be based on the principle of social justice allowing for access and control over resources. The conference may also be described as one that saw women demanding a change in a variety of areas that had not been tabled in other conferences. Women implored the need to engender new development thinking and practice a new ethics of governance, and new process of leadership, the creation of new institutions, new social values and new community structures; as well as the need to ensure women empowerment reoriented and shaped the all policies and decisions that affect women's lives (Heyzer 1995).

Strategies for the Post Beijing 1995 Period

Post Beijing 1995 adopted strategies for women's development such as the search for novel ways of ending the excessive poverty associated with women, by in any possible ways ensuring that women receive rightful assistances. Further there was an understanding of the need

to ensure women will be protected to new forms of poverty due to any would-be economic restructuring and globalisations. It may be argued therefore that this indeed pushed for a change in the way development would be perceived, planned and implemented (Heyzer 1995). This influenced suggestions for the formation new methods of environmental and social sustainability sensitive of the daily lives of people particularly with a focus on how they produce, consume, subsist and multiply in specific shared circumstances (Heyzer 1995).

Of critical importance among other strategies was the need for the social restoration and practical efforts to support the return to normal lives of women affected by wars, social and economic. There was a recognition that all these would be possible in conducive environments and thus influencing the preferment for development ethics based on sustainability, and social impartiality (Heyzer 1995). Heyzer (1995) justifies the possibility of success in these strategy in that they were based on the basics of the women's agenda that placed gender equity at the center of development processes that would benefit women and men equality. Women realized that if their agenda, aims and strategies did not involve the governments, very little would be achieved.

Heyzer (1995) says that at Beijing 1995 women sought the pledge of their governments and the international community to ensure the preservation of the formidable gains the several summits had achieved in issues of women and gender in development. Governments and the international community were implored to observe pursue gender-responsive development that invests in people, and use women's realities and rights in eradicating poverty, creating sustainable livelihoods, building stable lives in healthy communities, and in promoting peace on a long term basis (Heyzer 1995).

Successes of the Beijing Conference (FWCW) 1995

Four years after the Beijing Conference 80 percent of governments that reported on the actions to implement the Platform for Action expressed strong commitment to the goal of gender equality. A review of National reports showed the successes had been made in the status of women since the UN Decade for women (1976) and FWCW. It may be summarised that large

numbers of women joined the male dominated world of employment. Gradually women increased their stake in partaking in decision making in most sectors. Having jointly or solely become core in civil society activities across the world, women were able to exert more cognizance of the gender cause in all aspects of life. Another success was that they became more daring in lobbying their governments and the international community for practical changes in matters of gender and development. More women's organisations and non-governmental organisations partook of this task. At the General Assembly's plenary meeting, the Secretary-General expressed major successes after Beijing 1995 as the universal recognition of women's rights and the criminalisation of violence against women. Gender harmful traditional practices had been campaigned against globally, although dove-tailed in certain parts of Africa. Achievement were noted in states commitment to Beijing 1995 goals through their general consent to work together in tackling poverty and the trafficking of women and children. Another success lay in governments' prodigious support of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Setbacks in the Implementation of the Platform of Action/FWCW/ Beijing 1995

National reports reviews indicated that more was still needed in the implementation of the Platform for Action. It may be argued that violence and poverty remained as serious hindrances to gender equality globally. Setbacks were noted in the adverse impact of globalization such as trafficking in women and girls and force migration in general. The shifting nature of armed conflict upset the gains towards the dignity, rights and security of women (Gender Equity Development and Peace (GEDP) 2000). Women's gains in the economic spheres continued to be threatened by the widening cavity between nations, genders and widespread liberal democracy's stress on free market policies that see macro-economic policies distancing themselves from social protection issues (GEDP 2000). Another limitation lay in the glaring failure to attain gender equality in the political sphere internationally, let alone natio-

nally. The anticipated global representation of women in important positions remained pathetic in most countries. In both the North and the South women remained fewer to none in boards of directors in major business corporations, heads of state and parliamentarians (GEDP 2000). This was noted as keeping away the voice from where by then it would be making heavy impact in favour of women internationally. Other setbacks lay in the glaring shortcomings in containing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, armed conflict gender disparities, inadequate remuneration for women workers and their challenges in the informal sector as well as unpaid labour. Apart from no achievements in women acquiring decision making powers globally, there also appeared a reluctance in legislating for the right to land ownership and immovable assets for women on the part of the states (GEDP 2000).

June 2000 Special Session of the General Assembly

At the Special Session, governments and the international community endorsed their pledge to the action and expressed high interest in a common development agenda anchored on the principle of gender. Both recognized that all endeavours meant for the development of women were to take into account women's circumstances and their basic needs.

A holistic approach would be used to ensure the recognition of equal rights, partnerships, advancement of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (GEDP 2000). The Special Assembly acknowledged a gender perspective should be applied in policy formulation, budgeting and in all programmes. There was a consensus on the need to ensure these were to be informed by gender based research on the circumstances of women and girls and sex disaggregated data. In the interest of effectiveness it was recognized that better planning be implemented and effective monitoring of progress be done. Most importantly the Special Session emphasized the need for gender mainstreaming in all areas and at all levels (GEDP 2000). The need to complement mainstream and special services for women and girls was reaffirmed

Areas of Concern

The General Assembly's Special Session identified that there are several areas that still needed attention such as education, social service

and health including sexual and reproductive health, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, violence against women and girls, the persistent and increasing burden of migrant women including exploitation and trafficking, natural disasters and environmental management (GEDP 2000; ILO 2000).

The Special Session felt that there was a need to push for the development of effective strategies and legal measures, to ensure men and women carried equal workload and responsibilities in the home, society, politics, economy and workplace. It was recommended that progress in all these needed to be monitored (GEDP 2000). The centrality of education as one of the most ideal instruments of enabling women to be fully equipped with skills necessary for the labour market and making choices according to their circumstances was stressed. It was argued this would enable them to make significant contributions to improvements in their homes and nation in areas of nutrition, education of children and health care (GEDP 2000; ILO 2000).

2000 Special Session –GA: The Way Forward

Governments, the UN system, international and regional organizations including international financial institutions, the private sector, NGOs, and other sectors of civil society agreed upon 199 actions to be taken at the national and international levels setting new targets and reconfirming existing ones.

Some of the actions cited are as follows:

It was set that by 2005 the world should have made major strides in the reduction of gender gaps in formal education. In addition the Special Session pointed out that actions should be taken to ensure that by 2015 free, compulsory and universal primary school education should have been attained together with at least 50 percent adult literacy in favour of women (GEDP 2000; ILO 2000). It was also set that by 2005, nations and the international environment should have made long strides in the creation of non-discriminatory and gender sensitive milieu by legislative means (GEDP 2000). Members set that by 2015 a pro-gender high quality of life covering areas such as sexual and reproductive health care and primary health care in general should have emerged by 2015 (GEDP 2000). Actions were agreed to ensure the safety and protection of specific vulnerable gender categories such as

older women/aging, adolescent/young women; refugees/asylum seekers, indigenous women, migrant women, rural women, disabled women, female household heads, entrepreneurs/self-employed (GEDP 2000).

After the Special Session, the GA continued to base its resolutions on the FWCW so that the gains of the Platform of Actions' commitments would be realised. The GA decided to convene as a matter of urgency a special session from 25 to 27 June 2001 to address and review the problem of HIV/AIDS. Thereafter, several smaller sessions were held to ensure the goals would be attained. These sessions were referred to Beyond Special Session. The focus was mainly the issue of gender specific impact of HIV/AIDS, especially on women and girls during the special session. The CSW was expected in its 45th session in March 2001 to consider women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS; Gender and all forms of discrimination.

CONCLUSION

This work has focused on the emergence of women and gender as key issues in development. In tracing these issues, basic factors, that is, domestic, economic, political roles and social movements have been summarized. The period from 1960 to 1970 has been focused upon. The writings of Boserup's (1970) contribution to this theme have been demonstrated, the period 1975 to 1985 as the UN Decade for Women has been traced with literary and research works, the UNIFEM, successes and obstacles each receiving attention. Feminism's role and relevance in the rise of women and gender issues has been displayed.

The period 1985 to 1995 Beijing has been attended to particularly the resultant support women's issues. The short period (half a decade) from the FWCW Beijing Conference 1995 to 2000 General Assembly's Special Sessions, has been handled particularly the agenda, strategies, the successes and setbacks. The 2000 Special Session of the General Assembly has also been focused upon with more attention on the reaffirmations, setbacks and the new way forward. The long road from the pre-1960s to the present for the women and gender theme in development has been arduous. The movement has been gaining strength and support throughout with each decade/period presenting its obstacles. It is now possible to talk of women and gender as

indispensable factors in the development debate today.

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