

**MODULE 2
BASIC CONCEPTS OF GENDER**

**Session 4 No.1: Origin of the Women's Movement and
the UN Global Conferences**

NOTES/ REFERENCES FOR POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

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**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE – UN DECADE FOR WOMEN: 1976
–1986**

In 1972, the General Assembly, in its resolution 3010 (XXVII), proclaimed the year 1975 as International Women's Year with three objectives:

EQUALITY: TO PROMOTE EQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

DEVELOPMENT: TO ENSURE THE FULL INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN THE TOTAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORT

PEACE – TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S INCREASING CONTRIBUTION TO THE STRENGTHENING OF WORLD PEACE

MEXICO CONFERENCE: 1975 June 10 to July 2

Highlights: Adoption of two principle documents, namely:

DECLARATION OF MEXICO ON THE EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

WORLD PLAN OF ACTION for the implementation of the objectives of the International Women's Year

The MEXICO DECLARATION which includes 30 principles states:

1. The needs for measures to advance women's rights thereby linking their status with economic and political objectives.
2. EQUALITY between women and men is defined as equality in dignity and worth as human beings as well as equality in their rights, opportunities, and responsibilities.
3. Full and complete development means maximum participation of women as well as men is required in all sectors.

The World Plan of Action represents a global consensus on measures and actions to be undertaken at national, regional, and international levels to improve the situation of women. This includes:

1. ECONOMIC, LEGAL, SOCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND EDUCATIONAL MEASURES designed to implement the three objectives
2. Women are viewed as:
 - AS Human beings
 - AS Wives and mothers
 - AS Workers
 - AS MEMBERS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES and above all
 - AS CITIZENS
3. The Plan of Action recommended a proclamation of a UN DECADE FOR WOMEN
4. The Plan urges government to achieve by 1980:
 - a. Equal access to every level of education
 - b. Increased employment opportunities free from discretionary conditions

- c. Legislation to ensure women of voting and electoral rights, equal legal capacity and equal employment opportunities and conditions
- d. Increased numbers of women in policy-making positions at the local, national and international levels
- e. More comprehensive measures for health education, sanitation, nutrition, family education, family planning and other welfare services
- f. Guaranteed equal exercise of civil, social and political rights
- g. The recognition of the economic value of women's work in the home, in domestic food production and marketing activities
- h. The re-evaluation of the roles of women and men through the process of education

CONSEQUENTLY, THE IMPROVEMENT OF WOMEN'S STATUS WAS REGARDED AS A BASIC ELEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS BY THE MEXICO PLAN OF ACTION.

They are probably the beginnings of a "silent revolution" which has been taking place in our sub-conscious and is crossing over to the conscious level in society today.

What is "silent" about the revolution is that unlike other revolutions in history, its battlefield are not the streets or the workplace, but instead are the "household" and include a spectrum of situations which could be described as COOPERATION, CONFRONTATION, and CONSENSUS.

All or a combination of these are used to sensitive society on the rightful place of women.

If we look at development in this way, it becomes evident that the concept of WID OR WAD should not be restricted to the developing countries as it generally has been.

Even with reference to economic development, the concept should encompass the industrially developed countries, since

national and international economic processes affect women in those countries as well.

The growing international concern for improving the conditions of women worldwide as well as for considering alternative strategies to development was manifested in the UN DECLARATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR.

Since then, the recognition that women, as the other half of humanity in every country, are connected to development questions has become evident.

THE COPENHAGEN CONFERENCE: July 1980

Adopted the program of action for the Second Half of Decade with the aim of promoting continued efforts towards the three objectives of the Decade – equality, development and peace.

Definition of Equality was expanded:

Equality was now interpreted as meaning not only legal equality or the elimination of de jure discrimination, but also the elimination of de facto discrimination.

Thus allowing the equality of rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for the participation of women in development as both beneficiaries and as active agents.

This conference interpreted DEVELOPMENT as:

Development as being total development in political, economic, social, cultural and other dimensions of human life; the development of economic and other material resources; and the physical, moral, intellectual and cultural growth of the human person.

The conference emphasized that the development of women was not to be viewed only as an issue of social development but should be made an essential component to every dimension of development.

It was emphasized that any measures for women isolated from the major priorities, strategies and sectors of development could not result in any substantial progress towards the goals of the Decade.

The Conference also recommended an end of the Decade world conference to review and appraise the achievements of the Decade:

NAIROBI CONFERENCE : July 15 – 26, 1985

The World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace adopted two substantive agenda items:

- Critical review and appraisal of the progress achieved and the obstacles encountered in attaining the goals and objectives of the Decade: Equality, Development and Peace and the sub-theme: Employment, health and Education;
- Forward-looking Strategies of implementation for the Advancement of women for the period up to the year 2000 and concrete measures to overcome obstacles to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Decade.

The Conference called on the international community to:

1. enforce laws already enacted to provide for the equality of women;
2. make further efforts to enable women to take advantage of theoretically equal opportunities for education and training, particularly in technical, managerial, and non-traditional areas;
3. Recognize that women and children tend to be the hardest hit by poverty, drought, apartheid, armed conflict, family violence, and the marginalization caused by refugee, migrant, or ethnic minority status.

NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES (NFLS)

-Adopted through consensus by The Nairobi Conference.

Please refer to your copy of the NFLS and look at the table of contents and familiarize yourself with its structure.

The close relationship between the three goals of the UN Decade for Women (Equality, Development, and Peace) is underlined, and emphasis is placed on the achievement of these through specific measures to be taken in all areas, especially employment, health and education (the sub-themes for the Decade for Women).

In the NFLS, DEVELOPMENT is not considered as simply economic improvement or growth in GNP but:

1. Development means “total development” – in the political, economic, social, cultural, and other dimensions of human life, as well as the development of economic and other materials resources.
2. The objective of development is the improvement of the quality of life for all people.
3. Development efforts need to begin with improving conditions for those who are most disadvantaged:
 - Providing education, employment and health for all thus enabling people to be productive citizens who can control their own reproduction and contribute to overall development.
 - The role of women is a fundamental question for development of all societies.
 - All societies should provide women, particularly those who are poor and destitute, with the necessary means for increasingly

claiming, achieving, enjoying and utilizing equal opportunity.

- The successful participation of women in societal as legally independent agents contributes to further recognition in practice for their right to equality.

4. NFLS on the International Situation

One of the main obstacles to the effective integration of women in the process of development is the aggravation of the international situation including all forms of :

RACISM EXPLOITATION POLICIES OF FORCE
FOREIGN OCCUPATION DOMINATION
HEGEMONY

Thus the NFLS concluded: the resulting situation is a continuing arms race, which now may spread to outer space, wasting immense material and human resources needed for development. The gap between the levels of economic development of developed and developing countries thus continues to grow.

5. NFLS on EQUALITY/DISCRIMINATION

Another reason for the continuation of the unfavorable and unequal position of women, especially in developing countries:

- a. Lack of political will to eliminate barriers to the realization of measures including fundamental documents adopted by the United Nations, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- b. Other obstacles to women's participation in development:

POVERTY POPULATION GROWTH RISING
DIVORCE RATE INCREASED MIGRATION
TRADE PROTECTIONISM THE GROWING
NUMBER OF FEMALE HEADED HOUSHOLDS
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DEBT TRADITIONAL
ATTITUDES EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM
POLICY-MAKING ISSUE OF WOMEN IN
DEVELOPMENT HAS BEEN PERCEIVED AS A
WELFARE PROBLEM. IT HAS RECEIVED LOW
PRIORITY, HAVING BEEN VIEWED SIMPLY AS A
COST TO SOCIETY RATHER THAN A
CONTRIBUTION.

6. NFLS on Overcoming Obstacles

Commitment to remove all obstacles begins with the realization that:

DEVELOPMENT prospects will be improved, society advanced, and peace maintained through the full participation of women in defining objectives and models of development and in implementing the strategies.

The gender bias evident in most development programs should be eliminated.

7. NFLS on Implementation of Strategies at National Level

- Governments need to incorporate women's issues in all areas and sectors;
- Governments should create national machinery to implement policy as well as to recognize women's contributions to agriculture, food production, reproduction and household work, and reflect that unremunerated work in the GNP.
- Concerted action should be directed towards the:
- System of sharing parental responsibilities between men and women and society

- Priority should be given to providing a social infrastructure to share family responsibilities;
- Simultaneously bring about a change in social attitudes, so that new gender roles will be accepted.
- Areas that require specific action:

EMPLOYMENT HEALTH EDUCATION TRADE
AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND
TRANSPORT ENERGY ENVIRONMENT AND
SOCIAL SERVICES

8. NFLS on International and Regional Co-operation

The measures on these levels include:

MONITORING TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION,
ADVISORY SERVICES, INSTITUTIONAL CO-
OPERATION, RESEARCH AND POLICY ANALYSIS,
PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ACTIVITIES AT
INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS IN
DECISION-MAKING AND INFORMATION
DISSEMINATION.

Monitoring and evaluation should be carried out at international level, regional levels be based on national-level monitoring and include inputs from non-governmental organizations in order to collect information on effective ways and means to integrate women's concerns into the planning and evaluation of development activities.

9. NFLS on the Role of the UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

The specialized agencies and other UN organization, including the regional commissions should:

- should establish monitoring capabilities and procedures to analyze the situation of women in their sectoral or geographical areas;
- Measures of technical co-operation and training and advisory services require the re-ordering of principles for the allocation of resources as well as targeted financial material and human resource assistance.
- Technical co-operation should be approached with a new concept that will break the cycle of dependency, emphasize local creativity and expertise and will be based on the full integration of women as agents and beneficiaries.
- Specific guidelines or project procedures related to women in development must be developed;
- Adequate resources must be made available for substantive staff training to enhance the ability of the staff to recognize and deal with the centrality of women's role in development:
- Enable women to define and defend their own interests and needs, the system should provide assistance for programs and projects which strengthen women's autonomy, particularly in the integration process.
- The UN system should provide technical and advisory assistance at the national level to systematically improve statistical and other forms of gender specific indicators and information that can help direct policy and programs.
- The system should continue to strengthen training programs for women particularly in developing countries, through fellowships and other means of assistance.
- The UN funding agencies such as UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Bank and the World Food Program should ensure that women benefit from and participate in projects and programs funded by them.
- They further recommend that research should be carried out on establishing effective institutional arrangements at national level for the formulation of policies on women, including guidelines and summaries of national case studies.

- AS for the participation of women in the UN, it is recommended that the UN system take all necessary measures to achieve an equitable balance between men and women staff members at all levels. Also the UN is urged to support programs on networking and the exchange of expertise especially on vocational training.

GIVE NFLS THE WIDEST PUBLICITY!