

# Gender Concepts IN DEVELOPMENT Planning

BASIC  
APPROACH



UNITED  
NATIONS  
INTERNATIONAL  
RESEARCH  
AND  
TRAINING  
INSTITUTE  
FOR  
THE  
ADVANCEMENT  
OF  
WOMEN

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**Gender Concepts  
in Development Planning**  
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BASIC APPROACH

United Nations International Research and Training Institute  
for the Advancement of Women



# Table of Contents

	Page
I. Introduction	7
II. Understanding Gender: Words and Meaning	11
What Is Gender?	11
Is Working with Gender Issues the same as working with men and/or women's considerations?	14
Evolving Development Strategies	16
. Women-Only vs. Integrated Approaches	16
. From "Women in development" to "Gender and development"	16
III. Women Are Born: Gender Is Made	18
Gender Division of Labour	19
The Reproductive Dimension	21
Gender Division of Power	22
IV. Special Issues and Important Distinctions	24
Gendered and Female	24
Violence Against Women	24
Women's Human Rights	25
Women's Health	25
Family Planning and Population Policy	26
Related But Not the Same	26
Equity and Equality	26
Women's Condition and Women's Position	27
Practical Needs and Strategic Interests	27
V. Development Through the Gender Lens	29
Lessons Learned	29
Moving Forward	30
VI. Closing Thoughts	32
VII. Bibliography	33

# I. Introduction

Imagine, just for a moment, that you wake up one day to a world turned upside-down, a world where childcare facilities are located at Dad's workplace, where fertility statistics record average child per male, where mothers ask sons to clean up spills and daughters to change lightbulbs, where the evening TV news shows not a room full of grey suits but of floral-patterned ones when the leaders of industry meet.

Would you be surprised?

The year 1995 marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, which declared that *"We the Peoples of the United Nations Determined ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and*

*women and of nations large and small..."* In the half century that has followed, a different perception of the world has emerged, a world as novel and amazing in the light of those times as the scenes envisioned above still seem in ours. New technologies have revolutionized lives and workplaces. Fields of social inquiry and research have expanded, bringing new knowledge and understanding to every aspect of our lives.

At the same time, so many fundamental things remain unchanged. Poverty and oppression, fear and violence are constants all over the world. In many places around the globe, people live in worse conditions - and with less hope - than ever before.

Belief in the possibility of change for the better is the essence of development work. Yet one of the elements most resistant to

change has been the willingness of development planners and policy-makers to recognize the role that gender plays in the outcome of initiatives and interventions. Thoughts about what is appropriate for women and men are so firmly embedded in the development landscape that their assumptions and stereotypes - their persistence and power - are largely taken for granted.

Perhaps this is not surprising, given how deeply people - women and men, as development agents and as individuals - internalize gender biases, make them their own and reproduce them in their professional and personal lives. As this booklet will explain, gender issues are an essential component of the development process. But they are clearly much more. They touch upon - and touch deeply - our individual notions of masculinity and femininity, of what it is to be male or female, to raise and be

raised a daughter or son who grows to adulthood enveloped in an identity that culture and society have imbued with attributes, privileges and limitations based on our biological sex.

The private and social processes of acquiring gender identities are an important starting point for challenging persistent ideas that women and men are "naturally" suited to certain tasks, and that biology best defines who does what. One's intimate ideas about masculine and feminine characteristics may seem distant or even unconnected to the concerns of development work.

That, at least, has been the reaction of many road builders, city planners, loan officers and others with whom INSTRAW, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, has had occasion to query. Perhaps it is this personal

dimension that helps explain the resistance, even hostility, to introducing gender considerations into the development arena.

Another difficulty in introducing gender concerns to development planning has been the perception that gender is a subject for scholars, specialists or, simply, women. That is where this booklet comes in.

INSTRAW, the only United Nations agency specializing in research and training on women, advocates the introduction of new systems of conceptual analysis, research and training methodologies. Our experience in the field has shown that existing materials have failed to overcome the *gender block*. Many attitudes expressed by development workers at the community, national and international level demonstrate a gap between gender concepts as discussed by experts and application of these

concerns in policies, programmes and day-to-day work. It is from this vantage point that INSTRAW is interested in contributing to a larger understanding of the use of gender concepts in development planning.

This booklet is directed at planners and policy-makers in international and national governmental bodies, the private sector, non-governmental institutions and citizen's organizations. It is also our hope that this booklet will be taken to heart by the women and men holding these job responsibilities, for it is not just policies and programmes we aim to influence but people, as well.

Promoting consideration of gender issues is our way of furthering the mission of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women reflecting the new ethic for sustainable development which has as its primary objective the improvement of the quality of life of all human beings,



and their active participation as agents of change...balancing economic, cultural and social aims, reconciling growth with equity and underscoring the interdependence and partnership of women and men.

Beyond the official mandates is the demonstrated need to get at the root of the invisible obstacles that undercut so many development initiatives dealing with women. The gender lens can prove illuminating in unexpected ways, as one Danish development worker in Zimbabwe realized: "*The girls are very tired and not as active as the boys. I never questioned why.*" (Farr and Chitiga, 1991:32)

It is this type of questioning and analysis that can open our eyes and lead to the possibility of positive change. To this end, we offer this invitation to consider that at the heart of the gender and development nexus is the world of equal opportunities we are all working for.

Use the word *gender* and a barrage of questions is likely to follow. Does gender have to do with women only, or does it also deal with men? Does gender view all women as being the same? Does gender divide men and women, or unite them?

Perhaps the easiest way out of this confusion is to understand what gender is not. The term *gender* is not synonymous with the word *women*, nor is it shorthand for *women and men*. Use of the word *gender* is neither a way of distinguishing work with women from feminism nor a way of disguising it. Gender is neither a homogeneous category nor an exclusionary one. Gender is not a static concept, frozen in time and place. The study of gender relations for development planning does not concentrate on conflicts between women and men at the individual level, although it may consider these. Nor does gender encompass a particular social movement, like getting men to wash the dishes.

## II. Understanding Gender: Words and Meanings

### What is gender?

Gender is a concept that refers to a system of roles and relationships between women and men that are determined not by biology but by the social, political and economic context. One's biological sex is a natural *given*; gender is constructed. In the words of Naila Kabeer, gender can be seen as the *"...process by which individuals who are born into biological categories of male or female become the social categories of women and men through the acquisition of locally defined attributes of masculinity and femininity."* (Kabeer, 1990:9) To adopt a gender perspective is *"...to distinguish between what is natural and biological and what is socially and culturally constructed, and*

*in the process to renegotiate the boundaries between the natural - and hence relatively inflexible- and the social - and hence relatively transformable".* (Kabeer, 1990:9)

Just as women and men have different biological sex, they have also been assigned by society - often arbitrarily so - different roles based on their sex. These are known as gender roles - ways of being and interacting as women and men that are shaped by history, ideology, culture, religion, and economic development. Gender roles are learned. They differ from one society to another, from place to place and over time. Characteristics like long hair, considered feminine in one era, might be viewed as masculine in another.

Factors as fleeting as fashion and as pervasive

as unequal power relations determine the particularities of gender attributes in any given culture.

Sexual characteristics are determined in the womb at the moment of conception. Gender identity evolves throughout childhood and during adulthood. The construction of gender roles and relationships is a permanent process. Parents and siblings, relatives and friends all play a part in reinforcing certain behaviours for boys or girls while discouraging others. Schools play a formative role, as do the media and other institutions close to home that transmit values, role models and stereotypes.

The household is frequently viewed as the primary arena of gender relations. But women and men interact in bureaucracies, business, political parties and elsewhere imbued with the attitudes, aptitudes and conditioning assigned to them on the basis of their

gender, repeating and reformulating these patterns and stereotypes.

Talking about gender does not imply that all women are alike. But women share experiences, strengths and obstacles that bond them as a group and bestow them with common needs and interests. The category *gender* may not be as useful when others - like race, ethnicity, class, caste, nationality, age, or civil status - may have more significance. The forms that social and economic subordination take are as complex and individualized as those upon whom its burdens rest. Although gender is always present, it has been consistently ignored.

In short, gender is a concept, a condition, a category and a component. But gender is also an adjective as in gender-biased, gender-blind, gender-neutral and gender-sensitive.

**Gender-biased** refers to the discrimination, which, *"...ranges from the exclusion of women from developing programmes to wage discrimination and systemic violence against women."* *"In its most generic form , writes Jodi Jacobson, "...boils down to grossly unequal allocation of resources -whether of food, credit, education, jobs, information or training."* (Jacobson, 1992:9)

**Gender-blind** describes people or policies that fail to recognize gender as a key determinant of the choices available to women and men. By way of illustration, the household constitutes a true gender blindspot, insofar as programmes often view this basic unit of assistance as monolithic, ignoring the fact that not all - or even most -households conform to the stereotypical "two parents and their children" image and that the benefits and burdens of development are not equally distributed among all members.

In contrast, **gender-sensitive** describes an approach that considers factors rooted in the division of labour and power between women and men and uses information like income and influence to reveal who benefits from development initiatives and who does not.

**Gender analysis** is the systematic examination of the roles, relations and processes, focusing on imbalances in power, wealth and workload between women and men in all societies. Applied to the development process, gender analysis looks at how programmes and policies have a different impact on men and women.

**T**here are many ways to conduct gender analysis, but the basic questions to ask, as suggested by the 1991 Bergen Conference on Gender Training and Development Planning, are:

☐ Who does what?

(division of labour between women and men in the system under analysis);

☐ Who has what?

(access to property, entitlements and decision rights over private and public resources in this system);

☐ What factors influence this gender arrangement?

(identification of factors - culture, law, economics and political policy - that influence this gender arrangement, how they are changing if at all, and which are manipulable);

☐ How are public and private sector resources distributed and who gets what?

(what institutional structures are used, their degree of equity and efficiency, and how to make these more responsive to women and men).

## **Is working with gender issues the same as working with men and/or women's considerations?**

Working with women does not automatically mean that gender considerations are included. This is so because even though gender relations are always present, to take them into account requires a special interest in looking at them. In fact, much development

work with women ignores such gender concerns as the overemphasis on women's reproductive and domestic roles and the "ghettoizing" of women in traditional jobs.

Nor are gender relations necessarily taken into account when men become typists and women break through the so-called "glass ceiling." *"It is not in itself a sign of gender awareness to exchange one gender role for another"*, write Ellen Farr and Rudo Chitiga. *"Men and women can do different types of jobs and be equal, and they can do the same kind of jobs and be unequal. What matters is not so much who does what but rather who defines the roles of the other, and whether both women and men have a choice."* (Farr and Chitiga, 1991:25)

Confusion over women/gender terminology is understandable, as it reflects the gradual conceptual shift from focus on women to a focus on gender that has not been without debate.

In INSTRAW itself, the words *gender* and *women* have been used in different ways over time, changing with new knowledge obtained through experience. Proponents of the gender focus maintain that discussions about women implicitly involve women, men and the relationships between them and that gender terminology has better prospects for influencing the mainstream. Others believe that the term *women* should be used because women have been ignored for too long, and that shifting to gender will take women off center stage.

We believe that both views have value and that the answer lies not in *either-or* but in *and*. The concept of gender has proven essential for analytical purposes. But the terminology of women, with its diverse descriptive modifiers (i.e. older women, poor women, women of colour, etc.) remains useful.

## Evolving Development Strategies

Discussion of vocabulary transcends semantics when put into practice in the development field. A number of different strategies and paradigms have been used to channel development aid to women over the years. All have demonstrated both benefits and shortcomings.

- **Women-Only vs. Integrated Approaches**

Projects adopting a "women-only" approach channel special resources to women in order to prevent women's interests from being subsumed in general programmes. This methodology encourages women to express their knowledge, needs and plans without interference from men. Integrated programmes, in contrast, aim at reaching women without isolating them or

reinforcing discrimination. This approach operates on the premise that involving men in the promotion of women's interest may facilitate the adjustments and compromises that men may be called upon to make. This method operates on the belief that women and men must both participate in the process of their own development, and that the consonance of their interests should be emphasized.

- **From "Women In Development" (WID) to "Gender and Development" (GAD)**

The inability of development efforts to reverse the *feminization of poverty* originates the Women in Development (WID) strategy. While the WID approach was successful in drawing attention to the multiple dimensions of women's role and the positive impacts of women's inclusion in development,

it has not been able to guarantee women the benefits of development. In fact, the WID approach often proved counter-productive, generating new responsibilities and additional constraints on women's time.

Women in Development activities tended to focus exclusively on one role or another, ignoring how roles were articulated and overlooking social and power relations between women and men.

It was logical that, to be effective, a new development paradigm - known as the Gender and Development (GAD) approach - would evolve incorporating this dimension.

At the same time, the development community began to focus on empowerment as a corrective to welfarist approaches that viewed women as a dependant, vulnerable or disadvantaged group. Empowerment is a tool for building self-reliance that stresses people's capacity to promote their own development when proper support and a conducive environment are provided.

This new direction brings with it a growing awareness that the efforts of both women and men are needed to make the "people-centered" (as opposed to "economic-based") agenda of sustainable development a reality.



### III. Women are Born: Gender Is Made

The process of gender construction in the world today is not simply a *"process of gender differentiation, producing two 'separate but equal' gender roles for women and men"*, write Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson. (1981:151) *"Rather it is a process of the subordination of women as a gender"*. (Whitehead, 1979, as quoted by Elson and Pearson, 1981:151)

Gender analysis highlights certain fixed points in this process. While issues like the division of labour, the division of power and links between women's productive and re-productive roles have long been subjects of concern to scholars from many disciplines, they are only now being introduced as factors of analysis in development planning.

Central to this discussion is the recognition that the biological differences

between women and men are used as a justification for discrimination against women. Women's biological capacity to bear children is given as a rationale to circumscribe their activities to the domestic sphere, requiring them to fulfill certain tasks and determining what activities they perform outside the home. While both women and men become parents, women are largely defined by society in terms of their role as mothers, often overriding consideration of their needs as individuals. Moreover, the popular perception of women as the "weaker sex" contradicts evidence that women perform many of the same arduous tasks as men.

As Maureen Mackintosh notes, *"nothing in the fact that women bear children implies that they exclusively should care for them throughout childhood. Still*

*less does it imply that women should also feed and care for adults, nurse the sick, undertake certain agricultural tasks or work in electronics factories."*  
(Mackintosh, 1981:3)

The fact of sexual difference is used to arbitrarily limit women's autonomy, economic activities and access to political power. The social relations that divide the sexes give different opportunities to men and women. Society is structured in such a way that women experience pervasive disadvantages. Women around the world face structural, legal, social and cultural constraints that translate into discrimination, marginalization and subordination, both flagrant and insidious. Or, as Gertrude Mongella, Secretary General of the Fourth World Conference on Women, has stated: *"The problems of women are not different from country to country. They only differ in intensity"*. (United Nations, 1994:3)

## Gender Division of Labour

What has traditionally been referred to as the *sexual division of labour* corresponds, in the evolving language of gender perspective, to the division of labour along lines of gender. The same terminological update can be applied to the analytical concept of the *sexual division of power*, or the division of power relations by gender.

Analysis of the gender division of labour looks not only at who does what and for how much, but how tasks are acquired and how resources and rewards are distributed. In addition, it examines the links between these divisions and relationships of authority, decision-making and control at all stages of both the production and distribution processes. While the division of labour between women and men changes within

cultures and over time (in itself a convincing argument that the division is not "natural" but determined by society), women's work generally receives less pay and is less valued than men's work, which is usually better paid, more prestigious and more likely to be recorded in national accounts. In contrast, women's work tends to be part-time, poorly paid or not paid at all.

The way in which gender roles are organized in society helps explain the kinds of jobs created for women. Women's paid and unpaid employment has increased worldwide, but much of this growth reflects, for example, the international expansion of Export Processing Zones built around low-paid, "nimble finger" jobs – like textiles and electronics assembly – assigned to women. Employers prefer women in these jobs for a number of discriminatory reasons derived from gender bias: women are generally considered less

skilled, so they settle for lower wages; women are viewed as more docile and less likely to organize for their labour rights; women are thought to be better suited, by nature and by domestic conditioning, to monotonous, stationary and precision tasks.

Despite their increased participation in labour markets, women's productivity is frequently hidden in the home, in the fields and in the informal sector. As a result, women's multiple contributions to the economy are not fully reflected in national accounts. Overlooked by statistics, they are then ignored in planning and policy design. To remedy this, women's productive work must be made visible and given economic value. Both steps require a new look at the meaning and measurement of production.

Special efforts are needed to overcome professional aptitude stereotypes of women and men. How often in projects are the

technical aspects handled by men and the social aspects by women? Pre-conceived ideas about "women's work" are one of the factors responsible for narrowing women's employment opportunities to jobs, like cooking and cleaning. Vocational, technical, scientific and professional training is crucial to open opportunities for women to break traditional molds.

One cliché, however, is still true: *"Women's work is never done."* Women, employed or not, need relief from the burden of unshared and unpaid domestic tasks. More open attitudes about women and men's work must infuse the domestic sphere.

These must be backed by government policies providing electricity, water sanitation, health, education, childcare facilities and other basic services to alleviate the household responsibilities of women and men.

## The Reproductive Dimension

Gender analysis reveals the need to make visible the linkages between tasks associated with production and reproduction. From the standpoint of women's lives and family survival, human reproduction activities are not limited to giving birth, but include child-rearing, care and nurture of family, education, nursing the sick, carrying water, growing food, providing shelter and related responsibilities.

According to the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, WID researchers place the *"non-recognition of human reproduction activities"* and, more specifically, the absence of *"rational, organized, and legitimate articulation"* between production and reproduction *"at the heart of most manifestations of gender inequality."*

The broad view of human reproduction activities is an excellent starting point for the elaboration of gender-sensitive development strategies. From there, understanding the ways in which reproduction and production are intertwined in women's lives may help unravel the many knots blocking the way to the equitable distribution of development benefits.

## Gender Division of Power

Women's access to political and economic power is far from commensurate with their numbers, needs or contributions. Participation by women in decision-making lags behind men's at all levels: from the collective (in parliaments, boardrooms, unions, etc.) to the individual (in working places, between couples); from places where women are under-

represented to those where women are the majority (like many neighbourhood groups) but where their opinions carry less weight.

Male exercise of authority is so ubiquitous that it is accepted by many women and men as "natural". But although it is often enforced by physical strength, authority *per se* is not a biological attribute. It is a learned behaviour, a privilege, a reward, earned or arbitrary, granted and taken away. Men are socialized to exercise it; women are socialized to defer to it.

Manifestations of the asymmetrical power relations between women and men are everywhere to be seen. There are *de facto* powers, like male privilege in society and tradition; there is the male bias inherent in institutions like the police, the courts and legislatures; there is the ideological legitimization of women's subordination in education and culture; there are *de jure* imbalances

institutionalized in discriminatory property laws and inheritance rights. This is due to the fact that those laws and legal structures were created by men, under their own initiative and to protect their interest.

*It is much easier to think of power as a feature of race, caste and class relations than of relations between*

*women and men, particularly those from the same family," writes Kabeer. "Yet growing documentation of violence against women both within and outside the home, wife battering, rape, child abuse and enforced childbearing suggest that not only is power a widespread feature of gender relations but that it often takes a very coercive form. (Kabeer, 1990:9)*

## *IV. Special Issues and Important Distinctions*

**W**e noted earlier that dealing with women is not necessarily equivalent to dealing with gender. But in promoting certain highly visible "women's issues," the international women's movement has achieved growing acceptance of the gender perspective in a number of topics particularly associated with women. Some of these are briefly described below.

### **Gendered and Female**

#### **Violence against Women**

Recent research and activism on this issue has made it clear that, although all individuals face risks to their personal safety, violence is "gendered." Irrespective of whether the victim is female or male, in general, those who commit acts of violence are male.

Men and women experience violence in distinct ways, with the type of harm inflicted often determined by the sex of the victim. Furthermore, authors of violence are frequently motivated by issues of gender, such as the need to enforce male power. For these reasons, many experts within the United Nations have adopted the term "gender-based violence against women."

Gender-based violence against women occurs at all levels of society: in homes, in the workplace (often in the form of sexual harassment), in the streets, in the international arena (as with rape as a feature of war). Development planning and policy-making must begin to take the widespread phenomenon of violence against women into account. This is as true for projects and programmes in the obvious spheres (family welfare, crime prevention) as in other areas where the

connection may not be as immediately evident: creation and location of new jobs; transportation and urban planning; family planning; structural adjustment policies that have reduced the margins of family survival and brought increased domestic tensions; international peace-keeping activities and refugee services.

Protection and prevention efforts should be implemented at multiple levels: in the design of community services that attend to victims and identify authors, instead of giving assistance in silence; in the implementation of educational policies that do not adjudicate legitimacy to violent behaviour; in monitoring the media to combat sensationalism and pornography; and in examination of international issues like migration, economic exploitation and trafficking of women.

## Women's Human Rights

Focus on the human rights of women has made it possible for human rights guarantees to penetrate the "private" and domestic spheres from which they had traditionally been banished. Whereas human rights have long been considered universal, their protection is only now being recognized as "gendered" and thus requiring the creation of specific mechanisms to extend them to women. Better understanding of this need was a principal achievement of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna.

## Women's Health

Even health care for women can be gender-biased. Health services may over-emphasize family planning and maternal health while neglecting women's other health concerns, like battering, ageing,



mental health and research into the different ways women and men are affected by disease.

## Family Planning and Population Policy

Gender bias is apparent in the nearly exclusive focus on women's contraceptive use, ignoring men's reproductive role. This has negative repercussions on the development and promotion of male contraceptive methods. Family planning programmes and policies may also fail to recognize the extent of male power in women's reproductive decisions.

Some analysts cite gender bias as a fundamental factor in rapid population growth, arguing that where women have little access to productive resources or control over family income, they depend on children for economic security.

## Related But Not the Same

In applying gender concepts to development work, we have found it useful to clarify certain definitions and distinctions.

### Equity and Equality

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "equity" as "justice" and "equality" as the "condition of being equal."

Yet these two words are frequently used interchangeably, despite the important difference in their meaning.

The term equity connotes a situation of balance in which differences are compensated for. Different backgrounds - being born a woman, or poor, or a member of an oppressed racial group - may make it necessary to legislate protection or

redress. Provision of equal opportunities may mean that laws, customs and habits must be reformed. Gender equality calls for changes that affect not only the ways that women work, live and care for their families, but also the ways that men do.

### Women's Condition and Women's Position

Other distinctions are also useful in evaluating the impact of development initiatives directed at women. One of these is the difference between women's condition and women's position. Condition refers to the material context that defines women's situation - poverty, lack of education, lack of training, excessive workload, etc. Position refers to women's social and economic status in relation to men.

Most development work dealing with women focuses on women's condition, emphasizing

such immediate needs as access to credit, basic services, housing and attention to their responsibilities as mothers.

While satisfaction of these needs is important, from the gender standpoint it does not go far enough. Exclusive attention to improvements in women's condition can reinforce the patterns that perpetuate inequalities. In fact, as noted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (1991), policies and programmes implemented to improve material conditions alone may not only fail to achieve that objective but may perversely worsen the position of women.

### Practical Needs and Strategic Interests

One explanation of this contradictory outcome can be found in the distinction between women's practical needs and strategic interests.

Women's practical needs are generally derived from existing gender roles assigned to them by traditional patterns of division of labour. Many of these needs are geared at family survival: access to water, jobs, etc. Once again, the majority of development initiatives directed at women are primarily intended to satisfy practical needs. Strategic interests, in contrast, challenge existing gender roles and stereotypes, based on the premise that women are in a subordinate position to men as the consequence of social and institutional discrimination against them.

Attention to practical needs may also make room for consideration of strategic

interests. But satisfying practical needs alone reproduces divisions of labour and power that maintain the status quo. Providing seeds for organic gardens to the women who tend them may help the environment and improve family diet, but it does not change the relative position of the women who are responsible for growing the food.

Strategic gender interests seek such objectives as political equality between women and men, elimination of institutionalized forms of discrimination against women, abolition of the sexual division of labour, freedom of reproductive choice, and prevention of violence against women.

## V. *Development Through the Gender Lens*

**T**he question of gender equality has to be raised from the outset, together with that of development. If initiatives to achieve gender equality are to receive priorities and resources, they cannot be tacked on as an afterthought.

The gender perspective has already had an impact on the restructuring of the United Nations. The new Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, created in 1993, has as one of its main tasks ensuring an integrated development of policy, part of which is looking at economic, social and environmental issues through the lens of gender.

### **Lessons Learned**

One explanation for this new focus on gender lies in the lessons learned over the years. Central among these is that unless gender relations in any given sector are examined, planning is likely to be based on flawed assumptions. In particular, two premises implicit in traditional development practice have proven fallacious: that within society, economic growth is gender-blind, with women and men benefitting equally; and that within households, the impacts of development are distributed equally, regardless of gender. Development benefits do not necessarily "trickle down" nor "trickle across."

Here are some of these new insights:

- ❑ Development strategies are not gender-neutral, even when they are planned as if they were. Not to recognize gender bias is to reinforce it.
- ❑ Public policies do not affect women and men equally. To assume otherwise reduces the effectiveness of measures to enhance the status of women.
- ❑ Actions to advance both women's condition and women's position must go beyond their practical needs.
- ❑ Women's empowerment is a necessary complement to gender-sensitive development strategies.
- ❑ Development strategies that view women as active social agents and not as a disadvantaged group are central to sustainable development.

- ❑ Equal rights legislation and enforcement mechanisms that are unaccompanied by transformations in attitudes and behaviours will not eradicate inequalities or guarantee equitable distribution of development benefits.

## Moving Forward

Gender analysis must be a permanent feature of the development process. Questions must be asked at every stage how a particular activity, decision or plan will affect men and women. Here are some of the many ways to go about this.

- ❑ Listen to women. Don't ignore, discount or minimize their information and observations as "women's complaints."

□ Create conditions in which women are encouraged to identify their own needs, strategies and solutions. The empowerment approach is a valuable tool in this effort.

□ Recognize the "seamless web" of women's lives, encompassing a variety of productive and reproductive activities easily discounted in sectoral planning.

□ Take gender-based violence against women into consideration in programme and policy design. Incorporate prevention mechanisms against coercion and abuse of power into development initiatives.

□ Extend analysis of gender relations beyond the circle of kin and community to include

such spheres as legislative bodies, international institutions and the global market. Address the process of transforming gender relations at all levels: household, community, national and international.

□ Make women's productive work visible by employing new ways of identifying and measuring their contributions, like the sex-differentiated data advocated by INSTRAW and other United Nations agencies. Use comparative analysis to expose gender-based economic and social inequities.

□ Examine personal gender biases and challenge internalized assumptions about men's and women's social roles.

## *VI. Closing Thoughts*

**G**ender relations are dynamic. They do not evolve at a determined pace nor in a uniform direction; their present manifestations may intensify, weaken or be reformulated. Nor are these tendencies mutually exclusive.

What has been constant throughout time is the permanent influence of these processes on the formation of men and women.

Analysis of gender concerns – of the different impacts of development on women and men – does not create conflicts but can help to identify and resolve them. The goal is to bring about positive change, to move forward to a time when booklets like this will be viewed as an anachronism, because all people will have the opportunity to become not what society, or one sector of it, determines they should, but the women and men they choose to be.

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