THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD CONFERENCES ON WOMEN: 
A NEW SOUTH-NORTH DIALOGUE?

by

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The purpose of international conferences sponsored by the United Nations is to provide the international community with the opportunity to debate issues of global concern and reach consensus on objectives and solutions that address these concerns. Since 1975, women have been the focus of a series of such conferences. Among the topics of concern was the marginalization of women which was attributed in part to inadequate international development implementation. This thesis queries whether twenty years of specific focus on women have improved the lives of women in developing countries.

A comparative historical analysis of the United Nations World Conferences on Women traces the evolution of the idea of women as a specific constituency of development. The analysis centres around two main questions: (i) whether the conferences addressed relevant issues in a manner that would be conducive to satisfactory solutions, and (ii) whether changes in development implementation occurred as a result and, if so, whether such implementation brought results. In order to answer these questions, the thesis examines the dynamics among the various actors involved in these conferences and in international development implementation. A case study of population policies follows in order to illustrate some empirical assessment of the outcome of twenty years of focus on women in development.

The analysis divides actors in two groups, exposing their impact on development and the world conferences on women and vice versa. The first group consists of the nation states and the UN system involved in the South-North debate. The second group consists of the advocates of women as a constituency of development and the development community. The dynamics amongst these actors is linked to the objectives of the world conferences in an interactive manner.
The historical evolution of the idea of women as a constituency of development reveals that some beneficial headway for women has been made. Whereas the overall picture of living standards for the majority of the populations in the South, including women, have not improved significantly, the world conferences on women have gained considerable clout in the international community thus influencing development perspectives and implementation. Empirical evidence supports the notion, that tangible progress has been made in sectoral areas of development focusing on women. These results are mainly attributable to a convergence of objectives among the actors considered.
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To my daughter Sena
INTRODUCTION

This study explores the inception and evolution of the idea of women as a specific constituency of development, in order to enlighten the strengths, weaknesses and successes of that idea in carrying out its developmental objectives. The main point of reference used is the series of world conferences on women which has been taking place under the aegis of the United Nations.

Intuitively, "development" implies for most lay persons a change for the better. Kate Young (1993: 14) elaborates by describing the desired change as "the ordering of society and social and economic processes in such a way as to lead to the eradication of gross poverty, ill health and illiteracy and to rising standards of living and increased material comforts for all." The pursuit of this goal was undertaken in the emerging states of the South with increasing involvement from the international community as early as the 1950s. However, development assistance to the South experienced slow and uninformed, if not naive, beginnings. Variables such as ethnic heterogeneity within the new states, global improvements in public health-care delivery and the increasing global economic interdependence challenged the predictions of economic development models based on the experience of the industrialization of Europe.¹

By 1970 it became evident that expectations had not materialized for most of the developing world (Kabeer, 1994: 3; Gallin et al., 1989: 2, 3; South Commission, 1990: 36; South Commission, 1990: 36; South Commission, 1990: 36; South Commission, 1990: 36; South Commission, 1990: 36; South Commission, 1990: 36;

¹ For example, as Europe industrialized and standards of living improved, mortality rates as well as fertility rates declined. This process did not take place in Southern countries. As the South Commission (1990: 36, 37) observed, "post-[World War II] advances in medicine led to a dramatic fall in the death rate and longer-life expectancy ... well before birth rates declined resulting in a population explosion." While a development problem in itself, demographic pressures also make it difficult to reconcile productive efficiency with the need to provide jobs for a rapidly growing labour force (p. 37).
Young, 1993: 5). In spite of an average GDP growth rate of over five percent experienced in
developing countries during the 1960s (South Commission, 1990: 32), Gunnar Myrdal found, in
a 1968 study, that the "development-as-growth paradigm was accompanied by the economic and
social marginalisation of large sectors of the population" (in Young, 1993: 5). Women and
children were overwhelmingly represented in the poorest-of-the-poor group (Gallin et al., 1989:3;
Young, 1993:19; South Commission, 1990: 38). The specific focus on women in developmental
theory and practice has burgeoned considerably since then.

As Kate Young (1986: 10, 11) has rightly observed, we need to distinguish the various
voices who speak of, criticize, plan and implement development policies because they are
influenced by the assumptions which inform them. The topic of women in development must
be analyzed within the various contexts which inform it such as social movements, the South-
North dialogue, international relations norms and changing global political and economic
conditions. Jaquette identified several voices in the UN conferences on women: "... liberal and
socialist feminists, New International Economic Order advocates, and others [who] spend
considerable time identifying and debating the source of women’s subordination, from male

The first World Conference on Women, convened in Mexico City from June 19 to July
2, 1975, was the beginning of the dialectical process among feminists, the development
community and First-World, Third-World and socialist-bloc nations. Over the subsequent two
decades, consensus and accommodation among various voices was reflected in world conferences
on women and the implementation of their recommendations. This thesis examines these
processes in turn. The ultimate objective of this analysis is to determine whether the shift in
development focus, if a shift did indeed take place, has translated into progress towards the stated
goals of development. The framework for analysis centres on two main groups of actors
involved in the world conferences on women and in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the various reports emanating from these conferences. The first group of actors examined in the analysis comprises the international community and the UN system, the second comprises the advocates of women as a constituency of development policies and the international development community. Once the necessity to "integrate women in development" was established in the 1970s, any subsequent analysis which explores whether the conferences were asking the right questions should consist in two separate sets of inquiries. This I propose to pursue in the following fashion: the first set addresses whether the questions raised and the responses addressed prevailing conditions; the second set attempts to establish whether implementation has taken place and, if so, assesses its effectiveness.

Chapters II and III focus on the former question. Chapter II is concerned with the dynamics and processes that involve the first groups of actors and chapter III does the same with the second group. Chapter IV addresses the second set of questions with a synthesis of chapters II and III and some empirical evidence on development implementation in the field of population policies.
I. THE UN CONFERENCES ON WOMEN

In the following section I outline the time frame, actors, processes and documents encompassed by the world conferences on women. This description will enable the reader to become familiar with the various periods within which the conferences took place as well as the breadth of actors and issues these conferences involve.

The Northern women’s movement is directly credited for having pressured the UN to declare 1975 the International Women’s Year (IWY). Pietilä and Vickers (1990: 73) report that an oral tradition in the UN traces the inception of the idea to a Finnish Non-Governmental Organization (NGO): the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF). Together with the support of other NGOs present at the 1972 session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, WIDF drafted and presented a proposal for an IWY to the Commission which it in turn presented to the UN General Assembly. The General Assembly unanimously adopted the recommendation with Resolution 3010 (XXVII) of December 18, 1972 (UN, 1980a: 113).

The momentum created by the IWY proved significant and long-lasting. The initial declaration of the IWY was subsequently extended to a period of twenty-five years. The momentum gained with an international "theme" year dedicated to women prompted a sustained interest on the part of the international community to the point where international conferences on women have become part of a regular process. The General Assembly has supported this process by endorsing successive declarations and plans of action adopted at these conferences. In fact, these conferences consist in a feedback mechanism which has been put in place in order to monitor short- and long-term objectives and strategies globally.

In a first instance the General Assembly resolution 3520 (XXX) of December 15, 1975 endorsed the theme of Equality, Development and Peace adopted under the title "Declaration of

The mid-decade conference which took place in Copenhagen from June 14 to July 30, 1980 adopted a "Programme of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace" which was endorsed by the General Assembly resolution 35/136 along with the conference recommendation "to convene in 1985, at the conclusion of the Decade, a World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women" (UN, 1986: 5, 91).

That conference, the third world conference on women, took place in Nairobi from July 15-26, 1985. The unanimous adoption, by the 157 states represented there, of the "Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women during the Period from 1986 to the Year 2000" effectively extended the process initiated in 1975 to a twenty-five year period (UN, 1986: 1, 6; UN, 1995a: 10; Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 45, 134).

Through its resolution 49/161 dated February 9, 1995, the General Assembly reaffirms "the importance of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies ... up to the year 2000 ... [e]mphasizes that the success of the Fourth World Conference on Women will depend largely on the follow-up to the Conference ... [and] [r]equests that the report of the Fourth World Conference on Women be submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session for consideration and action" (UN, 1995a: 1-7). In that same resolution the General Assembly noted with satisfaction that preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women were well under way. Preparatory
documents for the Fourth World Conference on Women contain objectives to be attained beyond the year 2000 and as late as 2015 (UN, 1995a: 29). One document states that: "[t]he GA [General Assembly] should include the follow-up to the conference .... In 1996, 1998 and the year 2000, it should review the implementation of the Platform of Action" (UN, 1995a: 113). Considering the commitment of the General Assembly to the process so far, it seems unlikely that it would not support the ongoing process beyond the year 2000. As Pietilä and Vickers (1990: 73) observed, the dimensions and repercussions of the initial proposal for an IWY proved beyond its initiators' dreams.

Not only has the process taken impressive dimensions time-wise but the goals and strategies target numerous institutions and organizations at the national, regional and international levels. A comparison of the reports of the first three conferences of Mexico, Copenhagen and Nairobi reveals a sharpened focus with regard to the three thematic components of Equality, Development and Peace as they relate to actions and actors at all levels.

While the Mexico Report provides plans of action, it merely consists in a random list of broad topics around the themes of Equality, Development and Peace. In contrast, the outline of the Nairobi Report, issued ten years later, lists "obstacles, basic strategies and measures of implementation," as distinct sections under each thematic heading. Each of these sections targets specific areas for policy implementation. The improved formulation of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies is the result of a systematic monitoring process engendered at the Mexico conference and refined subsequently.

The Mexico report specifically instructs UN agencies and commissions to submit monitoring reports to ECOSOC on a regular basis (UN, 1976: 40). The impressive list of preparatory documents leading up to the Copenhagen Conference reveals extensive studies undertaken by various UN bodies including the Secretary General and the UN Regional
Commissions. The identification of obstacles clearly enunciated in the Nairobi report was based upon a series of documents entitled "Review and Appraisal of Progress Achieved and Obstacles Encountered," undertaken by the Secretary General and UN agencies and also based upon responses made to the "United Nations Questionnaire to Governments" (UN, 1984a). In addition, the 240-page World Survey on the Role of Women in Development undertaken by the Secretary General at the request of the General Assembly (resolution 35/78 of December 5, 1980) contains an impressive collection of data and statistics on women in development (UN, 1984: d). The topics covered in the World Survey include Agriculture, Industrial Development, Money and Finance, Science and Technology, Trade and Energy.

The 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development will be the third similar report to be used as one of the principal documents for a World Conference on Women. The 1994 Survey will be used as a principal document for the Fourth World Conference on Women which will take place in Beijing from September 4-15, 1995. Mention is made in the introduction to the Survey that, for the first time, "data for three time periods (1970, 1980 and 1990) ... provides the possibility ... of examining trends in women's economic participation relative to men's" (UN, 1994a: 1). This is due to the Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT) created by the Statistical Division of the Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis of the United Nations — an achievement which took twenty years to realize since it was first stated as a requirement for appropriate policy formulation in the Mexico Report (UN, 1976: 32-33).

The reports emanating from the various conferences are divided into several sections targeting specific actors. Paragraph 27 of the Mexico report stipulates that "[t]he recommendations for national action in this plan are addressed primarily to governments...." Paragraph 183 under the heading of global action states that "[t]he plan envisages that all
organizations of the United Nations system should take separate and joint action to implement its recommendations, including the relevant United Nations organs and bodies." These UN organizations are specifically identified under the heading "Operational activities for technical co-operation" as, among others, "[t]he United Nations Development Programme ... the United Nations specialized agencies, including the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund" (UN, 1976: 35, 36). Considering the relevance of these actors to development activities it is important to examine the constraints and capabilities their position within the international community and the UN system places on their contribution and commitment to the plans and strategies of the World Conferences on Women.
II. THE UN ACTORS - CONSTRAINTS AND CAPABILITIES

In the introduction to the present thesis, I set out to undertake two sets of inquiries. I mentioned that chapters II and III would address the first set which consisted in assessing whether the world conferences on women addressed the issues affecting women in a manner that would be conducive to improve their condition — whether the questions raised in the conferences addressed prevailing conditions. In order to introduce this first aspect of the inquiry, I begin by looking at the impact that the first group of actors — the international community and the UN system — has had on the conferences and on development. The framework of analysis is defined in terms of constraints and capabilities of UN actors. The understanding of constraints and capabilities of nation states and the UN system in the context of this thesis is determined by economic power and principles of international law. Constraints and capabilities of states in terms of economic power determine the extent to which these actors are able to redefine priorities and reallocate resources towards social and economic development. In terms of international law, constraints and capabilities of states are influenced by prevailing norms of the international community.

In this chapter I focus on the Development component of the theme of the women's conferences — Equality, Development and Peace — as it relates to the South-North political-economic relations over the two decades during which the world conferences on women have taken place. The analysis reveals that the structural debate which has preoccupied the South-North dialogue and the economic relations among these states has dominated not only the development aspect of the conferences on women but also the implementation of development policies. The economic constraints of Southern states and the economic superiority of Northern states have impeded the immediate progress of the idea of women as a constituency of
development. However, the world conferences on women initially made some progress in terms of nation states commitment to a new international law document affecting women.

The South-North Debate

The theme of Equality, Development and Peace strikes one, at first, as a broad and ambitious mix of issues. However, the Copenhagen report stressed that these three objectives were interlinked and thus the theme which originated at the Mexico conference has been maintained and elaborated upon. The Nairobi report (UN, 1986: 7) reiterates that: "[t]he three objectives of the Decade — equality, development and peace — are ... mutually reinforcing, so that the achievement of one contributes to the achievement of another." Nevertheless, observers have commented that the origin of the three-part theme is the result of a negotiating process among nations of the First World, Third World and socialist bloc:

Market economy countries stressed equality between men and women as the key factor in the struggle to improve the latter’s status, while developing countries considered overall acceleration of economic and social development the most important thing from the point of view of both women and men; they took the view that Western-type equality could only become a reality when the basic material needs of all people had been satisfied. Socialist states held that equality between men and women was already a fact of life in those countries, and therefore emphasized the same political issues they stressed in other UN fora (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 78).

The different focus espoused by states, which Pietilä and Vickers reported, are consistent with the ideological debate which took place within the UN General Assembly. The world conferences on women have not escaped the UN debate which has been taking place between developed and developing countries since the end of World War II. Simply put, the debate consists in requests on the part of the Southern states to establish special international economic rules that will enable them to "catch up" with Northern states. Over the decades since the end
of World War II, efforts to improve living standards in the South have been attempted for the most part through development assistance and integration of the new states in the liberal international economic order. As of 1974, the South-North relations in this regard became more antagonistic. The transformation in South-North relations was clearly expressed by UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim in a speech in early 1975:

Many new nations, having won political independence, find themselves still bound by economic dependency. For a long time it was thought the solution to this problem was aid and assistance. It is increasingly clear, however, that a New International Economic Order [NIEO] is essential if the relations between the rich and poor nations are to be transformed into a mutually beneficial partnership (Menon, 1977: 2).²

The South-North discourse contains deep-seated differences which present major political obstacles to a consensus regarding economic development. Not only does the debate reveal principles inherent in the liberal international economic order (LIEO) as opposed to those of the NIEO — free market versus command-based economies, equal treatment of equal sovereigns versus preferential treatments for weak states — but it also entails the predominance of civil and political rights (the North) over economic, social and cultural rights (the South), and individual over collective or communal rights (Vincent, 1992: 262-266). To the language of rights and the priority of the collective over the individual that often opposes the South and the North is added the notion of equity and distributive justice in international economics.

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² The NIEO and its accompanying Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States has been viewed as reflecting a shift in the rationale for development assistance. Whereas prior to these documents Southern requests for development assistance matched Northern states' philanthropic sentiments and sense of collective responsibility, the NIEO and its Charter transform the consensus into rights claims on the part of the South. In addition, these documents request developing states' exclusion from reciprocal tariff reductions and the extension of preferential tariffs to developing countries.
In this latter respect, the NIEO is the antithesis of the LIEO. The NIEO and its Charter have been viewed as "an explicit affirmation of social justice in international economic relations" (Jackson, 1990: 118) — a concept which clashes with the fundamental principles of a free-market world economy and equal sovereignty of nation-states. The Southern viewpoint stems from a historical perspective which places responsibility for South-North economic inequalities on the North, whereby colonialism and the Bretton Woods institutional setting become the culprits of exploitative dynamics in South-North relations. Proponents of the NIEO maintain that unless and until the changes they request take place, the South will never emerge from its hopeless situation of economic dependency and poverty and the inequality between North and South will increase.

The difference between the thematic components of Equality and Development referred to by Pietilä and Vickers not only reflects significant disagreements in the interpretation of the economic and political world order but also distinct priorities stressed in intergovernmental fora. These differences have affected South-North political and economic relations and the United Nations system as a whole. In the following section, I expose the impact that the South-North relations have had on the world conferences on women and on development implementation in the decades since the focus on women was initiated through these international conferences.

The South-North Debate Impact on the World Conferences on Women

The reports emanating from the conferences on women illustrate directly the intensity the South-North debate experienced during the 1970s. In December of 1974, only six months prior to the Mexico City world conference on women, the UN General Assembly ratified the "Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and its accompanying "Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States." Yet, these two documents already feature in a list of the Mexico Declaration as "United Nations instruments" upon which
the Mexico Declaration is based (UN, 1976: 2). Paragraph 18 of the Mexico Declaration states that: "[t]he present state of international economic relations poses serious obstacles ... which concern all of humanity and women in particular. It is therefore essential to establish and implement with urgency the [NIEO], of which the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States constitutes a basic element" (UN, 1976: 5).³ Already, the Mexico Report reflects disagreement within the UN regarding the NIEO. For example, a footnote in the report is made to the effect that: "[d]uring the World Conference of the International Women's Year, some representatives stated that reference to the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States should not be interpreted as indicating a change in the positions of delegations on the Charter as stated at the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly" (UN, 1976: 12).

The Mexico conference took place during the early stages of the NIEO debate, and references to the NIEO are not nearly as frequent nor as intense as those made in the 1980 Copenhagen Report. Short of enumerating every instance where the NIEO or its Charter are mentioned, suffice it to say that NIEO rhetoric clearly dominates the tone of the Copenhagen Report. The best illustration of the way in which women's concerns have been subordinated in the general economic debate going on in other UN fora is paragraph 41 (UN, 1980a: 13) of the "Review of progress achieved in the first half of the decade: lessons for the future":

The processes described ... demonstrate that, while traditions, customs and practices greatly hinder the advancement of women, some serious constraints to the economic participation of women in national development are international in nature and derive from the pattern of relationships between developing and developed countries.

³ It is important to note that the only reason this resolution passed in the General Assembly was due to the majority voting system of the Assembly. Southern States hold a majority since they are more numerous. Many of the industrialized nations did not vote in favour of these documents.
There seems to have been considerable disagreement at the Copenhagen conference: "The
delegation of Switzerland stated it profoundly regretted the failure of the efforts of conciliation
... to save the consensus of the conference .... [It] expressed the hope that, despite the deplorable
debate that had taken place at the final plenary meeting [all efforts] would not be lost" (UN,
1980a: 207). In fact, some forty States either refrained from approving the Programme of Action
for the second half of the women's decade — one of the objectives of the conference — or they
expressed strong reservations regarding its content. Significantly, industrialized countries
predominate in this group. Thus the United States, Canada, the Scandinavian countries, New
Zealand, Australia, all of the European Community, the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan
figure in that group (UN, 1980a: 197-209). Reasons for their position overwhelmingly reflected
a disappointment regarding the fact that the Conference had been used by some delegations as
a forum for issues best left to other UN meetings. Some countries made specific reference to
the NIEO. For example, while Canada mentioned (UN, 1980a: 198- 199) that it supported some
sections designed to meet the aspirations of developing countries, it also mentioned that it could
not concur in the adoption of blatantly biased political references where "some speakers had
preferred the comfortable ring of global political platitudes ... [to] the threatening terrain of
sexual inequality .... [T]hese results fully merited [Canada's] negative vote ... to signal its strong
disapproval of the mockery and farce which the Conference had made of serious proposals." Sweden, New Zealand, the European Community, Iceland, Japan and Germany also made specific
reference regarding the NIEO as the reason for distancing themselves from the Programme of
Action, mentioning that the condition of women in some countries was certainly not attributable
mainly to the international economic order.

The increased intensity of NIEO references, evidenced in the comparison of the Mexico
and Copenhagen conferences, confirm observations made regarding the overall political
international economic relations of the 1970s and particularly that between the Group of Seventy-Seven (which has grown to include 127 states) and the developed nations of the North. Spero (1990: 214) reports that during the 1970s various negotiations took place regarding the establishment of the NIEO. The Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC) which met from 1975 to 1977 "linked Northern interests in an energy dialogue with OPEC to the Group of Seventy-Seven desires for negotiations on other raw materials, finance, and development as well as energy" (Spero, 1990: 214). According to Spero, the ability of Southern States to exercise increased pressure on the North for a NIEO reflected the South's new sense of power due to the unity it temporarily managed to achieve, linking commodity threats and particularly the oil crisis to other Third World demands (Spero, 1990: 213). However, by the close of the 1970s, the North felt less vulnerable — Southern unity had broken down and developments in international markets reduced the South’s bargaining power (Spero, 1990: 214, 217). Not only did developing countries lose the support of oil producing countries but world demand for raw materials slumped. These two factors eroded developing countries’ bargaining chip against the North since the latter no longer felt the threat of oil shortages and commodity prices had fallen. In addition, the integration of several advanced developing countries into the existing international economic order undermined the solidarity of the Group of Seventy-Seven.

As a result, in the 1980s the North reasserted its commitment towards market-oriented policies abroad and particularly their implementation in the domestic reforms of Southern debtors. While the South continued to use the UN and particularly the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to call for a "New International Economic Order," the requests moved away from the calls for radical reforms expressed in the 1970s. Instead, the South argued that in order to promote a global economic recovery, efforts should be made to help the South with
emergency measures such as interim commodity agreements.\textsuperscript{4} For the North, however, even measures such as these were unacceptable deviations from the liberal economic order. Northern countries felt that "[t]he principal measures to be taken by the international community were those that would preserve the liberal international trading and financial system .... Thus, in the 1980s, the North-South dialogue in the United Nations system increasingly became a dialogue of the deaf" (Spero, 1990: 223).

This latter development is reflected in the third conference on women held in Nairobi in 1985. While mention of the need for a new international economic order is made here and there, the suggestions are much more subdued than the demands made in the Copenhagen Report. Significantly, the NTEO and the Charter of Economic Rights are not mentioned along with the UN Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights as UN instruments upon which the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies are built (UN, 1980a: 6). This was a departure from both the Mexico and the Copenhagen Reports which mentioned the NIEO and its Charter as building principles for the reports. Nevertheless, while the Nairobi Conference adopted the Forward Looking Strategies as a whole by consensus (p. 143), the United States requested a special vote for paragraphs 98 and 100 in order to retain the privilege to vote against them. Paragraph 98 expressed regrets concerning the "lack of political will of certain developed countries to eliminate obstacles to the practical realization of such fundamental documents adopted by the United Nations as ... the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States ... [and] the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order" (UN, 1986). Paragraph 98 is the only paragraph in the Nairobi report where reference to the NIEO

\textsuperscript{4} The Southern proposal consisted in the creation of a "common fund" through UNCTAD to finance a "basket" of several commodity agreements, fixing upper and lower price limits through a buffer stock mechanism.
is made. Any other mentions of a new international economic order in that document are generic.

Clearly, the fora within which the discussions on women's involvement in development take place are informed by events taking place in the broader international relations arena. The disappointment expressed by the Canadian delegation at Copenhagen was echoed by many other participants. As Pietilä and Vickers (1990: 79) observed, even when the majority of delegates are women, as they are typically at women's world conferences, they will express their government's official line. Much of the NIEO debate consisted in placing responsibility of the Southern economic situation, and therefrom that of women, on the international economic order and on Northern states who controlled it. That rhetoric was reiterated in the two first conferences and with particular intensity in the Copenhagen report. To assess whether women's illiteracy and poverty were attributable to the NIEO was not the intent of some participants. Rather, the intent was to use the conferences and women's issues to pressure the North to commit to the NIEO.

The UN Organizations and the South-North Debate

In the above section I highlighted the relevance of the South-North debate and I exposed the degree to which official meetings, even when they are intended to focus on a particular constituency such as women, cannot escape the broader political debates of the international community. The South-North political and economic relations informed such debates which transpired in the conferences. Southern insistence and the Northern resistance regarding the NIEO, that were apparent in the world conferences on women, were an extension of behaviours taking place in the UN system. In the following section I expose Northern assertions for a LIEO
and the means through which Northern countries asserted that world order through the UN system.

The United Nations "one-state-one vote" procedure together with the preponderance of Southern States within the UN gives them a numerical advantage in getting documents, like the NIEO, ratified. This has provoked the resentment of Northern states who feel that voting weight should be commensurate with funding. This situation has resulted in a struggle for influence which has increasingly permeated the UN system, particularly the various bodies involved in economic and social development. While the General Assembly has been the main forum through which the Southern states have exercised pressure on the North for a New International Economic Order, many UN organizations have been implicated in this debate. Such a struggle within the UN is rendered possible by the fact that not all organisations of the UN involved in economic and social development are subject to influence by the majority-rule voting system. Two main groups of organisations responsible for development which have been identified within the UN system abide by different governing regulations. The World Bank Group and the IMF form one group. The UN organizations centred around the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) form another. While the World Bank and the IMF appear to be hierarchically under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) — and thus theoretically under the majority rule of the General Assembly — they enjoy much more autonomy than the UN organizational chart may lead one to believe. Unlike the General Assembly, voting power in the IMF and the World Bank is proportional to the financial contribution of each member. For example, each member of the World Bank "receives 250 votes plus one additional vote for each

5 The IMF might be included in light of the relevance of IMF policies to the economic development of Third World countries. However, the IMF and the World Bank are completely separate organizations.
share of stock it holds" (Kardam, 1991: 47). Evidently, rich members such as the United States exert an inordinate amount of power in these organizations. In fact, the World Bank is located in Washington, DC, and its president has always been a US citizen (Kardam, 1991: 47). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the other hand clearly falls within the mainstream of UN majority procedures.

As a result, the philosophies which guide these organizations have influenced the amount of funding they receive. While developing countries prefer to obtain development assistance through the UNDP because of its "impartiality ... [particularly] when it comes to dealing with sensitive social and economic policy matters" (Nordic Project, 1991: 58), Northern countries would rather see such assistance channelled through the World Bank and the IMF upon which they exercise more control. A study undertaken by the Nordic Project revealed that in the late 1980s, UN organisations that espoused a philosophy "in line with the thinking of market economists and those that have granted donors greater influence" have been rewarded with more funding (Nordic Project, 1991: 55, 89). The report also mentioned that the technical development assistance provided by the World Bank group eventually "exceeded that channelled through the UN [UNDP] organizations" and staff resources were also surpassed "both in number and qualifications, even within their respective areas of competence" (Nordic Project, 1991: 54).

In fact, the financial help to developing countries channelled through the World Bank and the IMF increased significantly from 1985 onwards with the American-designed Baker Plan (Spero, 1990: 186). This shift was accompanied by neo-classical economic policies. As Spero

6 The debt crisis of developing countries began with Mexico’s announcement in 1982 of its inability to service its debt. In order to avoid a global crisis of the financial system, several plans were attempted in vain from 1982 onwards. In light of various failed attempts at resolving the crisis, American Treasury Secretary James Baker proposed in September of 1985 a three-part plan to restore growth in fifteen of the most heavily indebted countries (Spero, 1990: 186).
explains, the strategy of the Plan aimed at restoring growth in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) through market-oriented structural changes, trade liberalization, financial liberalization, deregulation and privatization. While the IMF had already been increasingly involved in lending to debtor countries in the early Eighties, the World Bank was also involved in the new Plan with an increase of $3 billion in disbursements (Spero, 1990: 186). World Bank capital was further increased in 1988 (Spero, 1990: 188).

While the World Bank had focused on basic-needs development in the 1970s, the increased involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions in resolving the debt crisis was a reflection of a return to the traditional ideology of Bretton Woods, and the use by Northern states of their financial power within the UN to do so. For Northern states the LIEO is an essential tenet of a peaceful global order. This they intended to preserve in spite of Southern attempts to curb the rules of that order through their majority in the UN which allowed them to pass a resolution for a NIEO. The UN organizations which gave Northern states greater control over economic policies and financial flows to the South became the means through which Northern states would maintain the political and economic global order that espoused the principles of a LIEO.

When the debt crisis plagued the Third World in the 1980s, the IMF and the World Bank conducted development policies with a commitment to stabilization and structural adjustment. Such a practice was in line with the "classical positive sovereignty doctrine [by which]

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7 The 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (p. 14) describes Structural Adjustment Programs or SAPS as follows: "[SAPS] have focused on reducing government expenditures by restricting the money supply and bank credit, cutting social services and economic infrastructure, removing or reducing subsidies, especially on food, and reducing real wages and public sector employment." These policies aimed at "restoring and maintaining the viability of the balance of payments in an environment of price stability and sustainable economic growth." Such policies were initiated by the IMF in 1982 at the onset of the debt crisis and later on by the World Bank through the Baker Plan.
incompetent or self-indulgent governments are required ... to conform to disciplines which exist to uphold traditional banking rules and ultimately the world capitalist economy" (Jackson, 1990: 126). However, as Pinstrup-Andersen (1987: 2 cited in Daines and Seddon, 1993: 4) observed:

Until recently, and with a few notable exceptions, short term effects on the poor have usually been ignored or given low priority in the design of adjustment programmes unless they were perceived to threaten political stability. Yet because adjustments frequently include changes of particular concern to the poor (e.g., increasing food prices, reduced real wages, and declining expenditure on social programmes), those effects can be severe.

Since women and children had already been identified as making up most of the poorest-of-the-poor group, they were inevitably hardest affected by structural adjustment policies. Budget constraints imposed on Southern states not only worsened the condition of the disadvantaged groups, but they prevented Southern countries from keeping their commitment to the goals of the women's conferences. While governments agreed with the objectives of the women's conferences to provide more opportunity for women's integration in the economy and to enhance their economic productive role, the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) had several negative impacts on states' commitment to such goals. For example, the 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (1995: 15, 16) revealed that policies implemented under the SAPs such as: (i) cuts in public expenditures, subsidies and social services and the introduction of service charges increased the unpaid workload of women; (ii) price liberalization and delayed

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8 The origins of this doctrine have been traced to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. In light of the complex evolution of the doctrine the space available herein dictates a limited outline of the fundamental principles relevant to the topic at hand. The word "positive" relates to the doctrine concerning those rules that are acknowledged by states to be binding upon them (Mapel and Nardin, 1992: 317). Two tenets of the doctrine which have gained such view are the territorial integrity and equality of sovereign states from which flows the concept of non intervention stipulated in Article 2 of the United Nations Charter.
wage indexation particularly affected women because of their high concentration in the public sector and in the urban informal sector; and, (iii) "rising agricultural prices and government encouragement of foreign investment in agriculture appear[ed] to be diverting land and other resources away from subsistence farming (where women predominate[d]) to cash and food-crop production ... (where men [were] in control)." I elaborate on the impact of the SAPs in chapter IV where the case study of population programmes provides empirical evidence of states constraints due to the SAPs.

Reaction to the effects of the structural adjustment policies came slowly. According to Daines and Seddon (1993: 4), it is not until the middle of the 1980s that organizations committed to the welfare of the disadvantaged expressed concern regarding the outcome of these policies. "By the end of the fiscal 1989 the World Bank had concluded 143 structural adjustment loan agreements with 62 countries" (UN, 1994a: 14). It is not until the end of the 1980s that the IMF and the World Bank began urging caution and that attention was given to alternative approaches and more constructive programs for economic and social transformation (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1989: 88-92 cited in Daines and Seddon, 1993: 5). The third generation of structural adjustment policies designed in the 1990s emphasizes human investment from which it is hoped women will benefit (UN, 1994a: 17).

In the previous sections of this chapter I exposed the political and economic relations between developed and developing countries. Each section described the responses of Northern and Southern states to the economic conditions which prevailed in the 1970s and the 1980s. Constraints and capabilities of states influenced not only the rhetoric of the conferences on women but also development assistance to Third World countries. Evidently, considerable changes occurred from the inception of the first world conference on women in 1975 and the end of the Decade for Women marked by the 1985 Nairobi conference on women. These changes
were not foreseen and therefore not addressed in the objectives of the early conferences on women. In the following section I answer the question whether the subsequent world conferences on women responded to prevailing conditions. I use the example of structural adjustment policies to assess whether the conference on women which took place in Nairobi in 1985 reflected some awareness of the impact such policies were having on women.

The World Conferences on Women's Response to SAPs

If we are able to acknowledge with the benefit of hindsight that erroneous development policies of the 1950s and 1960s were due to an underestimation of the variables we were dealing with, then we should remember that lesson thereafter. The economic recessions of the Seventies, the debt crisis of the Eighties and the structuralist debates taking place within the UN all shaped the environment within which the Decade for Women took place. While the Mexico conference could not have anticipated such outcomes and the Copenhagen conference took place at the early stages of the debt crisis, by the time the Nairobi conference took place the side effects of the SAPs were noticeable. The aforementioned political and economic developments had a considerable impact on development policies and on poor women in the Third World. It is therefore necessary to see whether the conferences on women responded appropriately to the emerging development policies.

As mentioned earlier, the World Surveys are an important component of the feedback mechanism established through the conferences. Pietilä and Vickers (1990: 54) point out that the Forward Looking Strategies (FLS) of the Nairobi Conference should, in principle, directly reflect the findings of the 1984 World Survey. As a basic document of the conferences, the World Surveys 'should outline strategies to redress the failures of the past and to redirect the process of development in ways which will bring about development favourable to women'
(Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 54). This formulation already raises doubts as to whether the process is responsive enough to deal with ongoing changes. "Failures of the past" may not be the current policies. In addition, these authors report that the World Survey prepared for the Nairobi conference was finalized too late for it to be considered in its entirety as the basis for drafting the Forward Looking Strategies (FLS). In fact, the UN preparatory document to the Nairobi conference (UN, 1984d) entitled "World Survey on the Role of Women in Development" is dated December 11, 1984. Considering the fact that the Nairobi Conference was held in mid-July of 1985 and that the preparatory documents presented at the conference — such as the FLS — are revised and finalized through meetings of all members of the UN representatives prior to the conference, it is difficult to see how such consultation could have taken place and could have had the time within a six-month period to scrutinize a 240-pages global study covering a wide array of topics.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the Nairobi FLS table of content mirrors all except one of the subheadings of the World Survey. The one subheading which is absent is "The Role of Women in Money and Finance." At first, this section of the World Survey appears to dismiss the specific relevance of that topic to women when it states in the beginning paragraph that "most of the factors in this field, and most of the effects of trends in it are not gender specific" (UN, 1984d: 126). However, Chapters II and III of this section specifically address the impact of macro-economic monetary and fiscal policies on women. Paragraph 253 (UN, 1984d: 352) of the World Survey describes the contents of these two chapters: "chapter II discusses the costs for women of restrictive monetary and budgetary policies in the recent years of international economic difficulties. Chapter III advances national policies to redress the negative impact of [these] policies on women." In spite of the fact that Chapter II of the 1984
World Survey describes the impact of such policies on health services, social housing, food subsidies, education, and basic needs, discussion of these topics in the FLS hardly reflect these findings. This may be due to the fact that the World Survey chapter contains criticism of the way in which countries have increased public revenues by increasing indirect taxation rather than direct taxation (UN, 1984d: 140).

While the 1984 World Survey contained information pertaining to structural adjustment policies, that part of the study only made up a dozen pages of the 240-pages report. In addition, the report stated that the effects on particular "income categories, economic categories and social classes are very difficult to determine. Even more difficult to assess is their effect on women.... Also, women are not a homogeneous group" (UN, 1984d: 135). In comparison, the 1994 Survey on the Role of Women in Development (UN, 1994a) — a reference document for the upcoming Beijing conference on women — is much more confident on that matter. The first 20-page chapter of the 100-page report is entirely devoted to global economic restructuring and specifically addresses the issue of structural adjustment policies. The study rejects the results yielded by impact-assessment studies of structural adjustment programmes on women as being "riddled with conceptual, methodological and empirical problems" (UN, 1994a: 16). However, the report clarifies this statement by stating that "[i]t is more appropriate to emphasize women's inability to benefit from changes in the incentive structure under structural adjustment than the overall negative impact of adjustment policies." Nevertheless, the chapter concludes with several statements to the effect that economic re-structuring has affected women everywhere to a greater extent than it has affected men and recommends appropriate governmental pro-market regulatory policies (UN, 1994a: 27-28).
A preparatory document for the Beijing Conference entitled "Proposals for Consideration in the Preparation of a Draft Declaration and the Draft Platform for Action" (UN, 1995a) issued May 15, 1995, unlike its sister document for Nairobi, clearly reflects the emphasis the 1994 World Survey places on structural adjustment. Four paragraphs in the Section entitled "Global Framework" are devoted solely to structural adjustment policies. Similarly, the "Strategic Objectives and Actions" section contains numerous paragraphs that target these policies and more particularly the IMF and the World Bank. One suggested inclusion to the final document states that governments should: "[analyze from a gender perspective ... structural adjustment programmes ... with respect to their impact on poverty, on inequality and particularly on women]" (UN, 1995a: 22). Paragraph 61 requests actions be taken by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund such as: "[r]eview[ing] the impact of structural adjustment programmes on social development by means of gender-sensitive social impact assessments and other relevant methods ... [and] ensuring that women do not bear a disproportionate burden of transition costs" (UN, 1995a: 24).

The Beijing Conference which will take place in September 1995 — fifteen years after structural adjustment policies were implemented on a large scale — will address that specific aspect of economic development policies. This suggests the length of time required for meetings of such magnitude to single out evolving problems and bring them to the forefront. While there is no doubt that the impact of such policies is felt immediately at the local level, it requires an inordinate amount of time to bring about a universal response.

**Principles of International Law**

While the constraints and capabilities of states used in the context of this thesis were informed by their economic situation within the international economic order, they were also
informed by principles of international law. Such constraints and capabilities have also had an
impact on the world conferences on women and vice versa. I now turn to this aspect of the role
of UN actors and the women's conferences response to same.

Janis (1988: 44) observed that "[r]esolutions of international organizations are sometimes
regarded as a form of 'soft' international law — 'rules which are neither strictly binding nor
completely void of any legal significance,' but which in time may harden into customary law."
While resolutions passed by the General Assembly are non-binding, they nevertheless reflect a
broad consensus, hold symbolic significance and create pressures for change in the international
system (Pearson and Rochester, 1988: 334). Deliberations and decisions emanating from the UN
have increasingly shaped international law. International conferences provide the space where
dynamics of global governance occur in a functional way for states to reconcile differing views
or influence one another. International law has been shaped increasingly by treaties which are
the product of large conferences organized for that purpose by the UN, and "[t]his universality
has in turn increased its usefulness as an instrument for making claims against states on behalf
of individuals ... [or] groups" (Mapel and Nardin, 1992: 318).

According to Jones (1992: 44), there presently exists nine fundamental principles forming
the core of the "declaratory tradition" in modern international law.\(^9\) As mentioned earlier, the
reports emanating from the conferences listed various UN documents as instruments containing
the guiding principles upon which the content of the reports was based. The references to UN
instruments signal the fact that the declarations and recommendations endorsed in the reports of

\(^9\) Jones (1992: 44, 45) enumerates these nine principles as: the sovereign equality of states,
the territorial integrity and political independence of states, equal rights and self-determination
of peoples, nonintervention in the internal affairs of states, peaceful settlement of disputes
between states, no threat or use of force, fulfilment in good faith of international obligations,
cooperation with other states, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Jones adds
that all nine principles can be found in the United Nations Charter.
the world women's conferences adhere to, and are consistent with, universally agreed-to principles of international law.

The appearance and disappearance of the NIEO and its Charter in the women's conferences reflect the difficulty the emerging states of the South have had in adding these two international law instruments to the nine existing ones. The fact that references to the NIEO disappeared from the Nairobi conference also reflects an acknowledgement that the lack of consensus regarding the principles inherent in that document and its Charter impeded consensus on other issues. As illustrated above, official representatives are bound by the position their state has taken with regard to these documents in other UN fora. Such evidence indicates that these instruments influence the constraints and capabilities of states to adopt certain norms of conduct. In the following sections I expose the mixed blessings these principles represent with regard to the world conferences on women, and I use as examples the principles of state sovereignty and nonintervention to do so.

In the introductory section to this chapter I mentioned that the South-North debate also opposed Northern concerns over civil and political rights to Southern concerns over economic, social and cultural rights and the concomitant emphases on the individual (North) over the collective (South). This debate has permeated the women's conferences beginning with the respective choices of the theme components Equality and Development. In chapter III, I elaborate on the differences between these two thematic components as women attempted to reconcile their implications. Suffice it to say for now that the early emphasis of the women's conferences on women's legislative, political and civil rights were perceived in the South as "Western impositions of no interest to our women," and that cultural imperialism has been recognized as a sensitive issue with regard to women as a specific constituency of development (Young, 1993: 132). Representatives at the Copenhagen conference expressed concern that
"many of the women in their countries had been influenced by commercial publicity to overestimate the materialistic values of a civilization alien to their national or religious tradition" (UN, 1980a: 132).

This preoccupation with sovereignty and cultural imperialism is consistently reflected in the reports emanating from the conferences on women from Mexico to Beijing. While the Declaration of Mexico urges women all over the world to unite to eliminate human rights violations against women and girls, it also mentions that women and men should resist intervention in domestic affairs of states whether open or covert because of the sovereign right of states to establish their own economic, social and political system (UN, 1976: 12-14). Similarly, a draft preparatory document for the Beijing conference reiterated that "[the implementation of the actions to be taken contained in the health section are the sovereign right of each country ... with full respect for the various religious and ethical values and cultural background of its people" (UN, 1995a: 38). The women's conferences question who decides which values should take precedence and whether some traditional or religious values are not contributing to the marginalization of women. It was observed that in countries where governments were ideologically and politically opposed to any fundamental changes to the existing socio-economic system, women's organizations faced greater challenges in promoting the objectives of the women's conferences (UN, 1980d: 12). For example, an issue of interest to the women's conferences which was reportedly affected by state sovereignty concerned girls' education. A preparatory document to the Nairobi conference (UN, 1984e: 5) criticized the fact that "most developing countries consider[ed] that equal educational opportunity [did] not mean equal education, which should be tailored to the masculine and feminine roles as defined by society." The report noted that in Latin American and Arab states girls were usually given
domestic science courses while boys received agricultural or industrial training. Another related issue concerned women's freedom to decide upon the size of the family they wished to raise.

Evidently, the principles of sovereignty and non intervention provide states with capabilities which at times have impeded achievement of the objectives sought by the women's conferences. In response, the women's conferences have used means such as international law instruments to advance their objectives. The greatest self-acknowledged achievement of the world conferences was the adoption in 1979, and the subsequent entering into force of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* in 1981. While the success gained regarding the ratification of the Convention can be interpreted as one focusing on the Equality component of the theme of the conferences, it also has implications for the Development component. For example, in terms of population issues, the *Convention* provides legal rights for women to choose how many children they will have. Thus Article 16 of the Convention stipulates:

> States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women .... The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights (UN, 1979).

In chapter IV, I elaborate upon this aspect of the conferences and the implications that the principles of state sovereignty and non intervention and the *Convention* have had on women with a particular emphasis on population policies.

In this chapter, I focused on the first group of actors considered in this thesis as a first step to determining whether the world conferences on women addressed the issues affecting
women in a manner that would be conducive to improve their condition. The objective of the analysis was to expose the impact that states constraints and capabilities had on the world conferences on women, the goals sought therein, and development implementation in order to assess the conferences responses. The four following observations flow from the above. First, the theme of the conferences was determined by a political debate taking place within the international community. While the initiators of the world conferences on women had little control over the choices of the theme Equality, Development and Peace, chapter III will reveal the way in which the participants enriched their agenda by reconciling the thematic components. Second, the South-North debate overshadowed two conferences. While changes in the international economic and political situation in the early 1980s reduced the importance that the South-North structural debate had enjoyed in the women’s conferences, chapter III reveals that this outcome was also due to a consensus reached in the conferences. Third, the political and economic relations among Northern and Southern states and the global economic situation altered development implementation thereby affecting commitments to the objectives of the conferences in a way that was detrimental to women’s conditions. While there was little the early conferences could have recommended to palliate the consequences that the emerging global economic situation would have on women, they eventually targeted the negative impact of the SAPs and the organizations responsible for their implementation. Fourth, principles of international law had both impeded and fostered the objectives of the world conferences on women. In this latter respect, the world conferences managed to introduce international norms that would weaken state sovereignty claims on women’s rights. In chapter IV, I elaborate upon the significance that this achievement represents to women’s conditions.

Evidently, responses to the international economic situation occurred in numerous arenas other than the world conferences on women. Furthermore, ongoing national macro-economic and
political concerns led the responses of governments and the UN system in general without paying particular attention to women. The policies and priorities of this first group of actors are informed by their respective position with regard to the South-North debate and there appears to be little indication that some convergence is occurring. Nation states behaved in a way that was consistent with their ideological perspectives and world views. There was little attention paid as to whether development may have a counterproductive effect on particular sectors of the population, and, most importantly, whether such impacts were detrimental to all in the long run. This has led some observers to conclude that as the end of the twentieth century approaches most developing countries are still asking whether and how they can achieve economic growth and development in the present system (Spero, 1990: 157). One question to keep in mind when assessing the conferences on women is whether part of the solution could be found in bridging the South-North communication gap.

Development implementation is influenced by the numerous actors involved and the variables that emerge over time. The international economic situation and the concomitant states relations changed dramatically between 1975 and 1985. International fora lack the resilience required to glean which issues are most relevant to respond to in a short time period. As will be seen in chapter IV, the lack of funding for development projects such as population policies can have long term repercussions. However, the specific focus on women has provided a feedback mechanism which informs various actors of the impact their activities have on that constituency. There are indications that enough pressure came to bear on organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank for them to soften the third generation of SAPs.
III. THE ADVOCATES OF WOMEN AS A CONSTITUENCY OF DEVELOPMENT

I began the previous chapter with the statement that the theme of the world conferences on women — Equality, Development and Peace — was the result of a negotiating process between First World, Third World and socialist bloc nations. If the theme set the stage for nation-to-nation debates, it also set the stage for another group of actors to debate over the causes of women's problems — women themselves. That debate has had a profound impact on the Development component of the theme, and particularly so in the assessment of the implementation of the various recommendations emanating from the conferences.

It is difficult to determine from the various reports whether any of the three thematic components prevailed at any particular conference. Four different research papers express different opinions in that regard. Buvinic (1983) disagrees with Tinker and Jaquette (1987) when she asserts that the core topic of the Mexico conference was Development and not Equality. While Moser (1989) agrees with Tinker and Jaquette, Stephenson (1982) disagrees with all by saying that Equality was neglected at both Mexico and Copenhagen. In light of such results, undertaking yet another attempt at such an exercise would prove futile and redundant. Rather, pointing out whether increasing convergence between the differing viewpoints took place will serve a more useful purpose. In fact, two distinct processes can be identified. On the one hand the early concern with Equality under the law clearly stands out, separate from developmental concerns, and on the other the increasing influence of liberal feminist ideals and more particularly those of the WID perspective on the Development component of the theme are clearly
distinguishable as the Decade progressed. Nevertheless, Third World feminists' perspectives are increasingly manifest over time. These observations give rise to several questions. How could these conferences produce a clear set of strategies in light of such disagreement? Have Third World and First World feminist perspectives been reconciled and if so, what is the significance of such consensus? Why did WID become so significant and what was its impact on development? First, the analysis reveals that disagreements among women delayed productive outcomes. Second, the three components of the theme resulted in a "global feminist" movement uniting Third and First World feminists around the two common objectives of "gender equality and social transformation" (Jahan, 1995: 7). Third, the implementation of WID revealed serious weaknesses which have not contributed to the advancement of women. The role of the second group of actors — the advocates of women as a constituency of development and the development community — is illustrated in this chapter by looking at these questions in turn. In the first section of this chapter I look at the divergence and convergence of First and Third World feminist perspectives as reflected in the world conferences on women. In the second section I look at WID, the dominant development paradigm focusing on women which emerged as a result of the Decade for Women. In Chapter IV, I assess the implications the analysis of the first and second group of actors reveal for the overall achievements of developmental goals.

Rhetorical Debate Between First and Third World Women

In order to get to the roots of the women’s debate, it is necessary to recapitulate the inception of the idea of the International Women’s Year (IWY) and the first women’s conference.

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As mentioned earlier, the origin of the idea is credited to a Scandinavian women’s organization, and it was submitted to the General Assembly by the UN Commission on the Status of Women. These initiators focused on the topic of equality. Tinker and Jaquette (1987: 419) explain that, as far as the Commission on the Status of Women was concerned, it had been involved mostly — since its creation in 1946 — in promoting women’s equality before the law. Therefore, it was natural for this organization to view the main topic of the IWY in such terms. Of more lasting significance to the debates taking place among women was the strength and dominance of the Western Women’s feminist movements. The Western Women’s movements predominance in the conferences, in early research and in the implementation of development projects focusing on women has been amply documented (Young, 1993; Kabeer, 1994; Rathgeber, 1994). As Stephenson (1982: 28) observed, Western women’s liberation movements focused most specifically on women’s equality with men.

Not only did the First World women’s organizations press for the Equality theme component, but they did so because they often felt that such issues were common and fundamental to all women, regardless of nationality, race and class (Çağatay et al., 1986: 403). It is this belief that brought these participants to express their disappointment at the Copenhagen conference, charging that that conference had become politicized. However, initially for most women from the South, survival concerns were the main issues rather than their lack of agency relative to men (Young, 1993: 130-131; Stephenson, 1982: 289). Observers at these conferences provided a vivid picture of the climate and the intensity of disagreements which did not always transpire in printed final reports or recommendations. The atmosphere at the Copenhagen conference was so contentious that many thought that the women’s movement would disintegrate while others claimed that such a conflictual climate proved there never was nor would ever be a global women’s movement (Stephenson, 1982: 289). Another indication of the climate were
the apprehensions, not only among feminists who were to attend the following conference in Nairobi, but also the Kenyan government’s clear intention that conference unfold "with no unseemly demonstrations" (Tinker and Jaquette, 1987: 421).

One explanation given for the disagreements between First and Third World women focused on their role as official representatives at the World Conferences on Women.\footnote{It is important to note at this point that all three World Conferences on Women were accompanied by parallel NGO conferences: theIWY Tribunein Mexico city, theNGO Forumin Copenhagen and theForum '85 in Nairobi. Respectively, these conferences included four, seven and sixteen thousand female participants from all over the world. As a result, they have often been viewed as being World Conferences of Women "in the real sense of the definition" (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 3).} I alluded to this factor in the previous chapter. Tinker and Jaquette (1987: 422) observed that ignoring redistributive issues allowed women of Northern countries to pursue their view of women’s issues without conflicting with their nation’s agenda. Third World representatives found themselves in a much more controversial position: the pursuit of women’s issues at the expense of national goals could cost them political legitimacy at home. Still others commented that First World women’s lack of sensitivity to issues important to Third World women was due to their ignorance of the austere conditions under which women from developing countries had to live. Consequently, holding a conference in Africa in 1985 had the beneficial effect of providing First World women with first-hand exposure to the hardships of the developing world ( Çağatay et al., 1986: 404).

Some viewed the compromise over the theme Equality, Development and Peace as a blessing in disguise. While the theme created heated debates during the first two conferences and precluded consensus, these observers noted that the Nairobi Conference led to more positive results. Not only had women from different nations come to recognize their different needs, but the debates and ensuing research had enriched considerably the body of knowledge concerned
with these multiple and overlapping issues. Çağatay et al. (1986: 402) observed that the Nairobi gathering demonstrated a recognition and acceptance that women had diverse perspectives, issues and priorities. In addition, participants at Nairobi were determined not to repeat the contentious atmosphere of Copenhagen and to come to a consensus. Thus, First World women accepted that survival issues had to be addressed in order for the conference to be relevant to women throughout the world. While the goal of "legal equality" has been accepted as a minimum basis of consensus, Third World feminists increasingly incorporated actions geared toward legal equality in their activities ( Çağatay et al., 1986: 405; Tinker and Jaquette, 1987: 422; Schuler, 1989: 156, 157). In light of these observations, Tinker and Jaquette noted that the "by broadening the IWY topics, the UN had in fact broadened 'women's issues' beyond equality."

If this is the case, the analysis of the documents emanating from the successive conferences should reflect (i) the early overwhelming concern with equality, and (ii) the convergence of First and Third World feminist viewpoints with regard to development.

In order to undertake such analysis, it is necessary to become acquainted with a brief outline of the main principles which have been associated with First and Third World feminist approaches to development. The liberal feminist perspective of Western women calls for "sexual equality" or "gender justice" (Tong, 1989: 28). Tong explains that for liberal feminists, inequality between men and women means that "women have a lesser place, or no place at all, in the academy, the forum, and the marketplace .... [And that] [s]ociety [is] structured in ways that favour men and disfavour women in the competitive race for the goods with which our society rewards us: power, prestige, and money" (Tong, 1989: 28, 29). Within liberal feminist theory there exist two views about how such inequality should be redressed. For classical liberal feminists, removing discriminatory laws and policies will formally enable women to compete equally with men with minimal government involvement; for welfare liberal feminists, maximum
government involvement is required to eliminate both legal and socioeconomic barriers to women's progress (Tong, 1989: 29). Liberal feminists assert that the best means to enable women's enhanced participation in the public sphere are education and training. One important point — and weakness — in this theoretical perspective is that there is no clear position on the family. That is, liberal feminism does not take into account the public-private dichotomy whereby women's productive (public) as well as reproductive (private) role determine women's status and function. Critics have observed that liberal feminist ideology has not resolved the "paradox of women as citizens, workers and mothers" (Schaffer, 1988: 230). In sum, the weakness stems from the fact that liberal feminists support policies that enhance women's ability to compete in the public sphere as though they did not have another burden of work in assuming domestic responsibilities such as mothering.

As mentioned earlier, the perspective known as WTD emerged as the most popular approach to the inclusion of women as a constituency of development. Young (1993: 129) summarizes the combination of liberal feminism and the modernization theory of development as espoused by WTD: "[w]ith economic growth and modernisation, it is assumed that better living conditions, wages, education, etc. will be within the grasp of all and that the grosser elements of patriarchal traditional belief systems will be dissolved by the more progressive attitudes inculcated by modern education." The gist of the strategies espoused by WTD is to reform the social and economic system to make it "user friendly" to women through technical solutions such as training, access to resources and incorporation in the market (Young, 1993: 132).

Unlike First World feminists, Third World feminists argue that women's issues are not monolithic and that their marginalisation cannot be analyzed outside the political, economic and social structures within which they are located. For Southern feminists, it is not the lack of integration in development that contributes to the marginalisation of women but "the exploitation
and unequal conditions under which women [are] being integrated in the production process" (Jahan, 1995: 9). In contrast to the WID approach which pays little attention to structural divisions among women such as class, caste, ethnicity, nationality and creed, Third World feminists maintain that we need to reform social, economic and political structures. Third World feminism demands a total transformation of the development approach into one which reflects a gender perspective.

Kabeer (1994: 31) provides some examples of Third World women's views which illustrate this perspective. In 1972, a Government of India Commission reported that development had benefited educated and middle class women while lower income women had become poorer. The Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) criticized Western women's notion of "sisterhood," and distanced itself from the WID perspective in light of the latter's disregard for the impact of colonialism. In its 1982 Declaration emanating from a meeting in Dakar, AAWORD expressed its vision of "Another Development" as one of "structural transformation, a notion which challenges the economic, political and cultural forms of domination ... which are found at the international, national, and household level" (Bunch and Carrillo, 1990: 78, 79).

Feminist researchers questioned WID's insistence upon integrating women in development as a panacea to remedy their marginalization. Park (1993: 127-145) observed that in spite of their thorough integration in the modernization process through "their significant contribution to the export-led economic growth of the country," three decades of integration had not altered South Korean women's marginalization. Park points out that this may not only be due to cultural characteristics but also to institutional and economic structures. In sum, Third World feminists argue for a feminism which reaches beyond sexual egalitarianism.
Since the mid-1980s, the "empowerment" approach to development has emerged mainly from Third World women feminist research (Batliwala, 1994: 127; Moser, 1989: 1815). Most credit a Third World women's organization — Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) — for having clarified this concept in 1985. DAWN was created by Devaki Jain, an Indian economist, in August 1984. According to Pietilä and Vickers (1990: 38), DAWN has gained considerable universal recognition since 1985. The organization is cited by the South Commission as an example of South-South cooperation along with the Third World Academy of Sciences and the Third World Network of Scientific Organizations (South Commission, 1990: 157). DAWN has dissociated itself from traditional equality-oriented development approaches which are implemented "mechanically and statistically." It has declared its approach as a political movement which "has at its very core a process of economic and social development geared to human needs through wider access to economic and political power" (cited in Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 36).

The concept of power inherent in the "empowerment" approach to development consists in "a sense of internal strength, as the right to determine one's choices in life, and the right to influence the direction of social change" (Bunch and Carrillo, 1990: 77). Moser (1989: 1815) explains that the empowerment approach is derived from the experience of Third World women's grass-roots organizations. It is an approach to development which views women as agents of development rather than as passive subjects or even problems of development to be targeted by planners and agencies, and it places priority on the power of women in groups rather than simply as individuals (Sen, 1994: 8). It advocates the capacity of women to increase their own self-reliance in order to determine life choices, influence the direction of change, and gain control over material and non-material resources. It questions whether development necessarily helps
all men and whether women want to be "integrated" in Western-designed development models in which they have not been invited to participate in defining the kind of society they want.

In terms of implementation, this approach distinguishes between the condition of women which is linked to practical interests targeted by short-term goals, and the position of women which is linked to strategic interests targeted by long-term goals (Batliwala, 1994: 128). Batliwala (1994: 136) provides three examples of such a development approach: (i) the integrated development approach meets basic survival needs through organized women's collectives engaged in development activities; (ii) the economic empowerment approach focuses on women's economic security through women's organizations involved in savings and credit, income generation or skills training activities; (iii) the consciousness raising approach organizes women into collectives that deal with issues of subordination of women through consciousness-raising, self-worth, societal and gender analysis. These activities are usually undertaken by NGOs and the ultimate objective is for these women's organizations to become independent from the initiating NGO.

Most of the DAWN research and project implementation has been undertaken in South Asia. While acknowledging that the process taking place in that region is shaped by historical, political, social and economic conditions specific to that region, Batliwala (1994:127) writes that commonalities among Third World regions render the analytic framework for empowerment widely relevant. The empowerment approach has been viewed as one that recognizes diversity and unity. Thus the AAWORD Dakar Declaration states: "[f]eminism is international in defining as its aim the liberation of women from all types of oppression and in providing solidarity among women of all countries; it is national in stating its priorities and strategies in accordance with particular cultural and socio-economic conditions" (Development Dialogue 1982:15 cited in
Bunch and Carrillo, 1990: 80). This approach has been referred to as a "global feminist" vision since it works toward an integrated vision which includes Southern and Northern women (Bunch and Carrillo, 1990: 79). In the above section I exposed the theoretical perspectives that opposed First and Third World women. Evidently, a wide gap existed between these actors which initially affected their ability to reach constructive interactions. In the following section I trace the processes which contributed to bridge this familiar North-South communication gap.

Third and First World Convergence

A comparative analysis of the three past conferences and the preparatory documents of the upcoming conference will reveal the influence of WID and liberal feminism as well as Third World feminist views. To begin with, while the Mexico and Copenhagen Reports unconvincingly stressed the linkage between Equality, Development and Peace, the Nairobi Report displayed a much more sophisticated rationale connecting these topics. From the tautological rationale in the Copenhagen report (UN, 1980a: 11) — "[p]rogress toward any one ... has a beneficial effect on the other .... failure in one ... has a negative impact on the others" — we read in the Nairobi Report that

the promotion of the equality of women and men, requires concerted multidimensional strategies .... [I]f women play a central role as intellectuals, policymakers, decision-makers, planners, [their] perspective ... is critical ... [to] weav[ing] into the social fabric women's concept of equality, their choices between alternative development ... in accordance with their aspirations, interests and talents (UN, 1986: 8, 9).

There is also present in these words a perspective reminiscent of Third World women's requests.

In comparison, the Mexico report reflects Boserup's focus on the need to train women in modern farming technology, and the WID approach to the integration of women in development, to give
them equal pay for work of equal value, to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in politics, to change legislation pertaining to marriage and property. There is a greater emphasis in the Mexico Report than in those of Copenhagen and Nairobi for a change in functions and roles traditionally allotted to each sex within the family and the community and the provision of social services such as child-care facilities. However, the gist of this report definitely reflects the liberal feminist perspective requiring greater participation of women in the public sphere, and thus their integration in development, focusing on their productive role and their equality with men under the law, in employment, training and education. The Third World feminist perspectives described above do not appear at all.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the main characteristics of the Copenhagen report was the intensity of the request for a NTEO. Although some Third World feminists’ perspectives point to international structures — as does the NTEO — as contributory factors to the condition of women, there are several reasons why it is unlikely that the NTEO requests expressed in the Copenhagen report reflected the voices of Third World feminists. First, the NTEO has been conspicuously silent on gender inequalities (Kabeer, 1994: 71; Moser, 1989: 1811). Feminist theories which focused on structuralist analysis, such as the dependency theory, were rejected as lacking a gender perspective (Rathgeber, 1994: 82, 83; Kabeer, 1994: 49). As Antrobus (1991: 312) pointed out, "[i]nstead of pursuing the logic of a structural analysis which linked women’s issues to the call for a New International Economic Order ... women accepted an agenda which abandoned both the structural analysis and the attention to women’s strategic interests." Second, by the time of the Copenhagen conference, there had never been any comparative assessment made between the principles and goals of the NTEO and feminist perspectives let alone the conferences plans of action (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 55; Bunch, 1982: 30). Writing in 1982, Bunch specifically mentioned that "[d]eveloping feminist political
perspectives on issues such as the New International Economic Order ... is still work in progress."

Third, while several writers have reported the existence of feminist organizations in developing countries in the 1970s, a review of the literature based on observations of the conferences indicates that the impact of Third World feminist research organizations on the UN official conferences was only noticeable as late as 1985. This was due in part to the fact that consolidation of regional feminist research and action networks did not occur until the 1980s (Çağatay et al., 1986: 407). In addition, Pietilä and Vickers (1990: 80) suggested that many NGO participants attending the parallel conferences had not mastered lobbying techniques nor understood UN procedures to be able to have an impact on the official debates — an outcome which had left many of these participants disappointed. Thus, it was not until the Nairobi conference and the DAWN report that a Third World feminist research organization’s viewpoint on development truly created an impact on a UN intergovernmental World Conference (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 35). In light of these observations, it is very unlikely that the intensity of the NIEO rhetoric came from a Third World feminist agenda.

Another significant characteristic of the Copenhagen Report is the frequent mention of specific hardships faced by women in particular countries experiencing political problems such as Lebanon, South Africa, Chile and Nicaragua. The NIEO and the hardships of women suffering from political duress are the main echoes emanating from the South in the Copenhagen Report. Parallel and distinct from these two topics is the typical liberal feminist discourse focusing on equality and the need to integrate women in development. In fact, Copenhagen clearly illustrates the apogee of a profound schism between First and Third World women as they were struggling to reconcile the three thematic components of the UN Decade for Women. Those who have participated in the Copenhagen conference overwhelmingly report that the atmosphere was so contentious that many left sceptical about the usefulness of future gatherings.
Nevertheless, some hoped that the proliferation of Copenhagen reflected a creative strength which would subsequently bring about consolidation (Stephenson, 1982: 289). Such consolidation did in fact emerge at the Nairobi conference. While the Nairobi Report still overwhelmingly reflects the WID perspective and recommendations, the Third World feminist perspective is noticeable throughout. In particular, an overview of the Nairobi report reveals an awareness and acknowledgement that there exist differences among women:

... in the developing countries the problems of women ... are different from the problems women face in the industrialized countries and are often a matter of survival .... Different socio-economic and cultural conditions are to be taken into account when identifying the foremost obstacles to the advancement of women (UN, 1986: 29).

While the notion of empowerment does not appear in the report, reference is made to self-reliance and the formation of women's organizations providing credit and other financial assistance (UN, 1986: 33). More specifically paragraph 113 calls for all organizations involved in development to "enhance the self-reliance of women in a viable and sustained fashion ...; grass-roots participatory processes and planning approaches using local talent, expertise and resources are vital and should be supported and encouraged" (UN, 1986: 31). Criticism of welfare-oriented policies and assertions of women's ability to play an instrumental role in development given better institutional, technical and material resources are also mentioned (UN, 1986: 29).\textsuperscript{12} Demands for structural and social transformation are clearly expressed in paragraph 101:

\textsuperscript{12} Welfare policies are contradictory to the concept of empowerment of women in that women enter such policies "passively rather than actively, as recipients rather than contributors, clients rather than agents, reproductive rather than productive" — one of the main attempts of WID had been to dissociate from such policies (Kabeer, 1994: 6). As will be seen below, WID projects have not succeeded in avoiding the welfare aspect of development focusing on women.
The complexity and multidimensional aspects of changing sex roles and norms and the difficulty of determining the specific structural and organization requirements of such a change have hindered the formulation of measures to alter sex roles .... Thus, despite gains made by a few women, for the majority subordination in the labour force and in society has continued (UN, 1986: 28).

Paragraph 101 also acknowledges the fact that no conclusive analysis of structural effects on women’s condition had been conducted before 1985. In spite of statements such as those mentioned above, the development objectives of the Nairobi Report still reflect the WID perspective emphasizing education and training, and other means to facilitate women’s "effective integration" into the public sphere in order for them to attain equality with men. Nevertheless, the accommodation of Northern and Southern feminist views revealed in the Nairobi Report prompted Jahan (1995: 7) to write:

"The many exchanges between North and South held during the Decade facilitated consensus building. These dialogues recognized the differences in interests and priorities between North and South, but at the same time they sought to build North-South alliances around common goals. Gender equality and social transformation emerged as two common objectives shared by many feminists from both North and South.

Since 1985, Third World women’s perspectives have been recognized and accredited by those involved in the conferences on women. The most significant and pervasive illustration of the inclusion of Third World feminist perspectives is the 1994 World Survey — an acknowledged departure from previous studies. The introduction to the Survey states that unlike previous WID-influenced studies, a new gender perspective was adopted:

"What is new ... is formulating women’s issues in terms of gender. This changes the emphasis from women as a homogeneous group ... to an emphasis on relations between the sexes. Gender relations are the social, economic and political relations that determine gender identity. Gender relations shape women’s access to resources and their work opportunities (UN, 1994a: 2)."
The Survey clearly acknowledges not only DAWN but the empowerment approach. Several pages at the beginning of the Survey credit DAWN and the empowerment approach. It describes the "empowerment approach" in almost the same words as do Third World women's movements by saying: "[g]ender relations are influenced by class, ethnicity and other factors, including inequalities between countries, religions and political systems" (UN, 1994a: 2). Furthermore, the 1994 World Survey criticizes past WID approaches for their failure to recognize the interrelationships between women's multiple roles (UN, 1994a: 3).

Similarly, the preparatory document for a Draft Declaration and Draft Platform for Action of the Beijing Conference (UN, 1995a: 9) opens up its "Draft Platform for Action" section as follows:

[T]he Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment .... This means also establishing the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men at home, in the workplace, and in the wider national and international communities (p. 9)

Throughout this document, the reader's attention is drawn to the disadvantages women face from having to assume responsibility for unremunerated reproductive work in addition to remunerated productive work, and various sections provide "strategic objectives" to remedy the situation. For example, on page 73 and 74 two sections are devoted to "better harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men," and the "[i]nequality between men and women in the sharing of power [family responsibilities] and decision-making at all levels" (UN, 1995a).

Clearly, the word "empowerment" has appeared in other development documents since 1985. Concern has been raised that, over time, the concept has either become a buzzword replacing previous terms in development jargon or that it has been co-opted to justify increased burdens on poor women (Batliwala, 1994: 129; Antrobus, 1989: 192). For example, Antrobus
(1989: 192) has criticized budget cutbacks to social programmes as such co-optation of the term empowerment into "super-exploitation" of women's work. While references to the empowerment approach in the World Survey are not as radical as some Third World feminists have expressed it, some of its underlying principles are exposed and the survey certainly avoids "co-opting" the term to other ends. At no time does the World Survey make that mistake. Thus, the "Strategic Objectives and Actions" of the Beijing preparatory draft (UN, 1995a) carefully complement one another to avoid the problem of co-opting empowerment as described by Antrobus. It does so by pointing out that supportive social safety nets must accompany projects that focus on the productive capacity of women in order for these projects to meet the objective of empowering women.

In the above section I set out to analyze the impact the theme Equality, Development and Peace had on the advocates of women as a constituency of development. Evidently, the theme provoked unexpected debates which have had a considerable impact on feminist theory and development approaches. The consensus which emerged after ten years of debate has had profound implications in terms of social awareness and development theory.

The eventual consensus reached over women's "diversity and unity" which occurred after ten years of intense and at times acrimonious debates between First and Third World women has been interpreted as the birth of a universal social movement known as "global feminism" or an "international women's movement" (1994 World Survey, 1995: 2; Kardam, 1991: 13; Bunch and Carrillo, 1990: 72). However, the emergence of a consensus in the world conferences on women and the observation therefrom of the birth of "global feminism" should not be interpreted as a general and all inclusive reunion of feminist perspectives. While there has been increased dialogue and convergence between women of Northern and Southern states, divergences within feminist perspectives remain at times profound and affect both Northern and Southern
perspectives. For example, Staudt and Jaquette (1988: 275) point to differences between feminists who espouse individualistic bias and those who favour communal perspectives, between those who are committed to socialist world views and those who are not, and finally those who are anti-bureaucratic and those who fear the demise of the welfare state. Nevertheless, the degree of convergence between North and South feminist research cannot be underestimated. As Bunch and Carrillo (1990: 81) observed, "feminist vision of North-South interaction is based on mutual learning and respect .... This has seldom been the basis of Western international work."

In terms of development theory, the debates have generated an impressive research agenda that questions hitherto unchallenged assumptions underlying development policies. As Bunch and Carrillo (1990: 74) observed:

The critiques range from questioning the idea of "integrating" women into development, to advocating a new ethical framework in which the development process should be placed, to challenging both the concepts advanced by development researchers and agencies and the methods used by the social sciences in gathering the data from which development programs are designed.

Of particular significance is the fact that this research is undertaken, published and implemented by scholars and practitioners in the Third World as well as in industrialized nations. The credibility and impact of organizations such as DAWN have been welcomed in UN conferences on development which are usually dominated by industrialized nations.

Nevertheless, the initial lack of consensus among the various theoretical perspectives regarding the causes of, and therefrom solutions toward, women's enhanced well-being have had negative impacts on development focusing on women. The picture that emerges from the rhetoric of the conferences corroborates the observations of several participants. It took ten years for the perspectives of the various advocates of women in development to reach agreement on a theoretical framework that would encompass the theme components of Equality and
Development. It took twenty years before Third World women's perspectives were directly acknowledged in the conferences preparatory documents. The initial lack of consensus and the debates raised by the theme of the conferences resulted in more than a ten-year time lag before the NGOs involved in various fields of development could develop networks and work together constructively on their interrelated issues (Tinker and Jaquette, 1987: 420). The delay caused by the disagreements left room for consensus on one approach to development focusing on women. Since the inception of the IWY and the first Women's World conference, the WID paradigm came to prevail and became widely adopted in the development community and at governmental levels as the paradigm for women as a constituency in development. This is not to say that WID has benefitted from sustained support over time. For example, funding for the United States Agency for International Development WID office has considerably declined since the end of the Decade for Women (Staudt and Jaquette, 1988: 269). In the following section I analyze the emergence of WID and its effects on development focusing on women.

WID and the Development Community

The reason for WID's success has been acknowledged by feminist scholars as being mainly due to the overbearing presence of Northern feminists on various processes such as the world conferences on women. Some have attributed the impact these feminists had early on in the process to the benefit of greater economic resources they have enjoyed (Stephenson, 1982: 298). Others have pointed to the active involvement of WID in sponsoring studies to be circulated at meetings, briefing delegates and providing funds for participants at international conferences (Staudt and Jaquette, 1988: 267). Of particular relevance to the world conferences was the high level of American participation in the various development committees (Stephenson, 1982: 296). According to Pietilä and Vickers (1990: 74, 75), Northern women influenced
international conferences even prior to the Mexico conference such as the World Population Conference and the World Food Conference which took place in 1974. In the United States, the women’s committee of the Washington, D.C., chapter of the Society for International Development testified at the congressional hearings that frame US foreign assistance policies thereby considerably influencing the Percy Amendment (Kardam, 1991: 9). Basically, the Percy amendment stipulated that American bilateral and multilateral assistance programs were to be directed to activities that integrated women into the national economies of foreign countries. Women’s movements in the Scandinavian countries, Canada, and the Netherlands also influenced the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the participation of these countries as members of the Governing Council of the UNDP (Kardam, 1991: 31).

However, the predominance of WID is not solely due to the dominance of Western feminists. It is also due to an accommodation between liberal feminist theory and developmental theory in the early 1970s. The convergence took place both at the theoretical and implementation levels. The WID perspective emerged at the beginning of the Seventies under the acronym of WID for Women in Development — a title derived from a book by Ester Boserup published in 1970 and entitled *Women's Role in Economic Development* (Rathgeber, 1990: 78). Writing as an economist and planner, and focusing on women, Boserup gained the attention of both the development community and the women’s movement. Boserup pointed out that development theory and practice had failed to identify the productive roles assumed by women living in traditional cultures such as cultivators, processors of food and traders. As such, their interests had been neglected and their economic well-being as well as that of their families had been considerably undermined. For example, projects that aimed at modernizing agriculture provided training for men when traditionally it was women who had assumed this productive role. As a result, women were displaced from their traditional productive role, their income was diminished.
and their status and power within society undermined (Moser, 1989: 1810). The main theoretical point which rendered WID congruent with current development paradigms was the assumption that economic growth and modernisation would bring better living conditions, wages and education and that patriarchal traditional belief systems would thereby be dissolved (Young, 1993: 129). For WID proponents, it was not modernisation itself that had contributed to women’s increasing marginalisation but rather the implementation process that had bypassed them.

The recognition of women’s productive roles and their potential contribution to economic growth and development emphasized anti-poverty and equity considerations in research and implementation of development (Buvinic, 1986: 659). This occurred through WID’s interpretation of the failures of hitherto development in terms of observed "exacerbated inequalities between men and women" in the developing world. WID thereby collapsed the notions of equality espoused by Northern feminists with the emerging concepts of equity in development implementation (Moser, 1989: 1810; Buvinic, 1986: 659). Women could free themselves from the inequality with men (i.e. their subordination) through economic independence obtained from a more equitable redistribution of development resources. WID’s stress on anti-poverty and equity coincided with the development community’s shift towards securing basic human needs and reducing population growth. In the early 1970s, the development community realized that the "trickle down" effect of development had not materialized and called for an increased focus on redistribution in development. Concurrently, development theory correlated low fertility rates with women’s higher education and employment participation.

The merging of the development community’s agenda and the liberal feminist agenda was made possible through a shared understanding that women had been relegated, in the 1950s and
1960s, to the welfare sector of the development process through an erroneous assumption of their limited role as housewives, mothers and at-risk reproducers, while mainstream development had been aimed at men as productive agents and heads of household. The convergence took place between the development community and liberal feminists in the early Seventies through their consensus regarding the significant role women played in food production and population issues and the growing concern regarding these two development issues (Kabeer, 1994: 3; Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 74, 75; Young, 1993: 19). Young (1993) and Kabeer (1994) identify the shift in development policies between the first and second UN Development Decades — the period during which the first conference on women was initiated — as one from a focus on economic growth to one focusing on basic needs, from the conceptualization of women as dependent and passive recipients of the "residual welfare assistance" component of development policies to viewing women as producers and providers who were to be integrated as active agents of development on a theme of efficiency. WTD’s stress on women’s productive role and their under-utilisation was congruent with the economic rationale of some international development organizations. Kardam (1991: 80) thus concludes her study of the World Bank’s implementation of WID with the following observations:

\[t\]he extent to which the Bank incorporates women in development into its activities depends on the consistency of WID goals with the Bank’s goals and procedures .... WID issues have received a more favourable response from staff members when they were introduced and justified on the basis of economic viability.

WTD’s shift from anti-poverty to efficiency coincided with the emergence of the debt crisis and the implementation of structural adjustment policies. Some have observed that projects undertaken in that period focused increasingly on self-help components, and particularly so in projects that aimed at countervailing side effects of adjustment policies in low income groups.
An example given by Moser (1989: 1814) was the use of women's unpaid labour to distribute
milk to young children and run communal kitchens which received food subsidies. Criticisms
of such projects abound in anti-WID feminist literature as perpetuating poor women's situation
while at the same time increasing their burden of work.

A distinction must be drawn, however, between the WID rhetoric and its adoption and
implementation in development. As Young (1993: 131) pointed out, "[t]he reasons for some of
the perceived weaknesses in the WID approach are ... not necessarily solely rooted in its
theoretical approach." While I do not intend to conduct an in-depth analysis of WID
implementation, some remarks made by researchers in development will highlight the difficulties
experienced in bridging the gap between theory and implementation. One of the main
weaknesses of the WID approach was pointed out by Moser (1989: 1821) as "the lack of
adequate operational frameworks" which renders implementation extremely difficult for
practitioners involved in different aspects of socioeconomic development planning. In particular,
she points to feminist research focused on highlighting the complexities of gender divisions rather
than to the development of methodological tools, and the difficulty to "graft" gender onto existing
planning disciplines (p. 1800). Unlike many other feminist writers, Moser pointed out that the
literature consistently uses interchangeably the terms "equity" and "equality" in spite of the
definitional difference between these terms. Moser (1989: 1821) points out that "equity" is
defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "fairness," whereas "equality" is defined as the
"condition of being equal." While Buvinic (1986: 660) does not distinguish between the two
terms she points out that to demand redistribution of already meagre development resources to
women implies a zero-sum situation caused by the potential appropriation of these resources by
poor women at the expense of poor men. She concludes:
Action for poor women in the Third World, therefore, is conditional on the assessment that investments in women will not affect or cut back on development investments in poor men. The result is that welfare designs for women are preferred by development experts and practitioners .... The perceived costs associated with [productive approaches] contribute to the misbehaviour of projects for women, even when there is the will to implement production-oriented designs.

Others have attributed the constraints experienced by the WID approach to the incremental bureaucratic strategies required to promote changes within development-oriented organisations (Young, 1993: 131; Kardam, 1991: 13, 14; Staudt and Jaquette, 1988: 273). While Staudt and Jaquette point out that the Plan, Programme and Forward Looking Strategies emanating from the world conferences on women are an "operative framework for reformist bureaucratic action," Kardam observes that women's movements have had to advocate changes within the confines of existing institutions in order to build a new regime. Kardam's (1991: 2) thesis based on extensive research of the UNDP, the World Bank and the Ford Foundation implementation of WID is that:

the international women's movement, as a social movement, has been able to penetrate the relatively weak, decentralized development assistance regime, but is constrained by the very nature of that regime from turning general ideas into specific, clear, and implementable policies.

Nevertheless, the momentum WID gained early on in the process has translated in its adoption on a broad basis. Moser wrote in 1989 (p. 1800) that WID offices have proliferated both at governmental levels and in the development community, in countries as diverse as Japan, Zimbabwe and Belize. While WID has not remained static in its approach and implementation, a recent study of donors who have the reputation of mounting major WID efforts — the Canadian International Development Agency and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation — has demonstrated that this approach is still predominantly Northern, emphasizing women's
development with "very little reference to a [Southern] vision of alternative development" (Jahan, 1995: 27).

Considering the fact that the Southern perspective has only been acknowledged very recently, it is difficult to ascertain whether that approach to development will transpire in development projects focusing on women in the post-Beijing conference period. While the conferences and the literature point to a convergence between Southern and Northern women's views, much work seems to remain, at least at the official development assistance level, for such convergence to appear in project implementation.
IV. THE WORLD CONFERENCES ON WOMEN: A CASE STUDY ASSESSMENT

I began the present thesis by stating that its objective was to assess the strengths, weaknesses and successes of the idea of women as a specific constituency of development. I stated that the understanding of the objective of development is one of a process which fosters socio-economic changes in order to improve standards of living for all. More specifically, Young mentioned that the direct objectives of development were "the eradication of gross poverty, ill health and illiteracy." As mentioned in the introduction, the inception of a specific focus on women was due to the observation that in spite of more than a decade of development implementation in Southern countries, women had not yet experienced increased well-being; rather, they had become increasingly marginalized. I now turn to the second set of the enquiry: whether implementation of development focusing on women took place and whether it was effective. The first part of the inquiry consisted in assessing whether the conferences and the idea of women as a specific constituency of development expressed therein adequately addressed prevailing conditions. The second set of questions proposed aimed at assessing whether development implementation with a specific focus on women had occurred and if so whether it had been effective. In this chapter I incorporate the dynamics and processes exposed in chapters II and III into a specific development topic in order to answer that question.

In chapters II and III, I showed that the global economic, political and social contexts within which the first Decade for Women took place were considerably different than the ones prevalent when the idea of women as a constituency of development was initiated. Development approaches changed along with the changing international economic and political situation. In addition, the theme of Equality, Development and Peace of the World Conferences on Women resulted in a profound transformation of feminist theories, both in terms of a convergence
between First and Third World feminists and in terms of approaches to development. In this chapter I examine whether, as these processes took place, women have benefited from the improvements in development approaches that the world conferences on women sought to achieve. The analysis is also undertaken in terms of direct development objectives such as those mentioned by Young.

I deal with one issue of development, all others being beyond the scope of this thesis. The overall objective is to ascertain whether some general statement can be made about the improvements in the quality of the majority of Southern women's lives. I propose to undertake that analysis by focusing on the topic of fertility regulation since it is closely linked, both intuitively and theoretically, to the material, physical and psychological well-being of both women and their children. Another reason for choosing this aspect of development stems from universal concerns regarding population growth and migration (both international and domestic). Social, political and economic implications of population policies place them at the core of many other issues of development that focus on women. Among the indicators of women's increased marginalization in developing countries are (i) greater numbers of illiterates are found among women, and (ii) women suffer from high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity. In addition, Third World feminist researchers have observed that the overwhelming workload assumed by the majority of Southern women was exacerbated by their "integration" in development whereby productive, reproductive and community tasks place an inordinate amount of work on women's shoulders. Statistically speaking, increased education of women has been shown to be correlated with lower fertility rates and improved health for women and their children. As such, among developmental issues, the issue of fertility regulation clearly overlaps not only various aspects of development but also the thematic topics of Equality and Development of women's conferences.
There are several ways in which this analysis can be undertaken. One method of assessing progress would be to look at the goals of each conference in turn and the recorded achievements from one to the next. Another would be to look at specific time-series data on, for example, female literacy, accessibility to contraceptive methods and population growth. A third way would be to extrapolate from chapters two and three the impact that various actors have had on implementing changes and, therefrom, their prospects for seeing their perspective prevail in light of current trends. In the sections that follow, I take all of these approaches and conclude with a statement on expected trends for the post-Beijing women's conference period.

Framework of Analysis

As mentioned in Chapter I, the world conferences on women from Mexico onwards established a feedback mechanism in order to review progress made by the mid-decade, decade and thereafter until 1995 and beyond. Each conference issued lists of objectives under the names of Plans of Action (Mexico), Programme of Action (Copenhagen), and Forward Looking Strategies (Nairobi). Whereas the Copenhagen and Nairobi conferences benefitted from previous world conferences on women as a point of reference for measuring progress, the Mexico conference evidently did not. As such, an assessment of the Mexico Conference in terms of its advocacy regarding women as a specific constituency, must be compared to available data, research or other world conferences focusing on specific issues. In Chapter III, I alluded to the convergence between liberal feminists and the development community in the early 1970s on the issues of food production and population, and the participation of Northern women in the World Food Conference and the World Population Conference in 1974. I therefore use the population conference which took place in Bucharest from August 19-30, 1974, as a point of reference with regard to the specific focus on women and the prevailing approaches to this aspect of
development with regard to women in order to assess the changes made at the Mexico Conference one year later. I then move on to the subsequent conferences on women as well as the subsequent population conferences in order to assess changes over time.¹³

The analytical framework includes three components relevant to an appropriate assessment of the progress made with regard to the idea of women as a specific constituency of development. One component concerns the theoretical premises and implementation therefrom of population policies; the second flows from the first and is ethical in nature; and a third comprises statistical indicators. These three components appear throughout the comparative analysis which covers the time frame bounded by 1974 and 1995.

Two theoretical approaches to population policy need to be distinguished at the outset. One has been labelled the "populationist" approach and the other the "developmentalist" approach (Sen, 1994: 67). I quote Sen’s article in order to define these two approaches: The "populationist" approach "perceive[s] economic growth as both a necessary and a sufficient condition for reduction in population growth.... Increases in per capita income would generate the demand for contraception, which would be matched by an increasing supply of family planning services." The populationist approach is based in the experience of demographic transition in industrialized countries and the presumption of an inverse relationship between female employment and fertility behaviour (Buvinic, 1993: 213).¹⁴ The "developmentalist"...
approach focuses on "reducing the demand for children and raising receptiveness to contraceptive
technologies ... [through] improvements in general health (children's health in particular) and in
education (especially women's)." This approach surfaced at the Bucharest population conference
held in 1974 where it was coined with the aphorism "development is the best contraceptive" (Sen,
1994: 67). According to Sen, from then on it became the harbinger of new thinking in Southern
countries.

Ethical considerations in population policies consist in the difference between viewing
people "instrumentally" — as a means of achieving a goal (e.g., limiting births) — or
"intrinsically" — promoting their well-being and opportunities for wider choice (Anand, 1994: 75).
That is to say, ethical issues in population planning draw a distinction between the means and
ends of such policies. While the populationist and developmentalist approaches are both
instrumentalist in nature, they differ in the means by which they propose to achieve their end-
state demographic goals. One focuses on economic growth as the necessary means of arriving
at the desired end; the other focuses on decreasing child mortality and improving the education
of women. The ends of the intrinsic development approach are different. That approach views
the eradication of illiteracy, poverty and poor health as well as the freedom of reproductive
choice as the ends worthy of pursuit in and of themselves — not as means of reducing population
growth. As Bok (1994: 19) commented: the differences "are the more difficult to unravel as both
means and ends come together and interact at many levels."

While the populationist and developmentalist approaches may not be perceived as
ethically desirable from the intrinsic viewpoint, the social and economic conditions they propose
as being conducive to lowering fertility are nevertheless recognized as essential conditions to

of population growth (Sadik, 1991: 342).
successful and sustainable family planning. Therefore, the distinction between means and ends addressed in the context of the present thesis centres on the moral legitimacy that advocates of women as a constituency of development lend to various implementations of population policies. In this respect, the perceived implications with regard to policy implementation are twofold. Limiting the objective of population policies to the attainment of demographic goals either leads to coercive policies which impede upon reproductive freedom or they are manipulative because they focus on public-interest goals rather than on individual well-being. The drawbacks of such policies are that they tend to be resisted, lead to unsafe practices and are not perceived as beneficial by the people they target. On the other hand, viewing population policies intrinsically encompasses the idea of recipients of such policies as subjects and actors in reproductive decision-making thereby respecting their potential autonomy. The end of such population policies is individual well-being per se rather than demographic objectives and targets. In this sense, the recipients are not the objects of top-down policies. Their increased education, employment and well-being are not tools to limit their fertility but goods to be attained for their own sake. Judging from the perspectives expressed in the world conferences on women and elaborated upon in the preceding chapter, the latter perspective is preferable to proponents of women as a constituency of development, particularly those that espouse the empowerment approach.

In light of such dichotomous theoretical and ethical frameworks and the position taken by advocates of women as a constituency of development, any assessment of the achievements made with regard to the idea of women as a constituency of development precludes an analysis which relies solely upon statistics. Statistics are nevertheless useful for measuring whether any increase has been recorded in, for example, usage of family planning methods or reductions in maternal mortality, and whether the rate of global population growth has declined.
A chronological analysis of the world conferences on women and the world population conferences reveals that women's conferences played a leading role in transforming the theoretical and ethical approaches to family planning. Furthermore, overall global fertility rates have declined in the past twenty years. The results of the analysis reveal that gradual progress has been achieved since 1974 and I now turn to the examination of these changes and the contribution the various actors considered in this thesis have made to such transformations.

From Bucharest to Mexico

The most striking characteristic of the 1974 Bucharest population conference is the lack of reference to women in any of the paragraphs which refer to family planning. Access to family planning are, in general, "rights" extended to couples and, in rare instances to "couples and individuals." Changes made to paragraph 14(f) (UN, 1975b) subsequent to debates which took place during the conference suggest that the omission of the word "women" in reference to family planning was not merely an oversight. This debate is reported at the end of the report where it is recorded that a vote was called in light of objections raised to the draft version of paragraph 14(f). Asked whether they would rather see the wording "all couples have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children," or whether they would prefer to add the words "and individuals" after the word "couples," forty-six representatives voted against including the additional words, forty-eight were in favour, and six abstained (UN, 1975b: 125). In contrast, numerous references to other issues of development did not hesitate to call upon "women's rights." Most significantly, Resolution IV entitled "Status of Women" makes no linkages between women's status in their society and their ability to control the number and spacing of their children (UN, 1975b: 30). This is in spite of the existence of a UN report by the Secretary-General which explores the issue of the status of women. It seeks a definition
of "status" that would be as culture-free as possible. It concludes that "low status derives from a lack of control ... and a lack of choice in the unfolding of one's destiny" (in Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 121). While the ability of women to decide on the number and spacing of their children evidently has a considerable impact on their "destiny," this fact does not appear at all in the Bucharest report and particularly in the section regarding the status of women.

Debates at the Bucharest conference also centred on the ethics of various rationales regarding population policies and North-South tensions with regard to population growth. The Algerian government's representative reportedly submitted the following draft resolution:

[I]n order to create in the countries of the third world a just society in which families can realize their full potentialities, it is necessary to: (a) reject all solutions that ... encourage [a] Malthusian or [a] neo-Malthusian approach which would consolidate the inequalities in the world (UN, 1975b: 120).

Nevertheless, the Bucharest Report never refers to women's health, burden of work and overall well-being in relation to the desirability of family planning. The report is overwhelmingly concerned with instrumentalist policies geared towards demographic goals within a developmentalist approach. Objections raised with regard to neo-Malthusian instrumentalist policies reflect a political tension between the South and the North rather than a concern for women's interests.

A comparison of the 1974 Bucharest report with that of the Mexico women's conference, issued one year later, reveals a dramatic contrast. The most striking departure concerns the consistent and specific mention of women's rights with regard to family planning that is stressed throughout the Mexico report. In a first instance, the Mexico Declaration states: "[t]he human body, whether that of woman or man, is inviolable and respect for it is a fundamental element
of human dignity and freedom" (UN, 1976: 5). The section of the Mexico Report entitled Specific Areas for National Action further specifies that

[the right of women to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information and the means to enable them to exercise that right ... [is] closely interrelated with such crucial demographic variables as age at marriage, age at birth of first child, the length of interval between births ... and the number of children born (UN, 1976: 28).

The report also stresses that women hold these rights equally with men, that both men and women should be clients of family planning programmes because their mutual understanding and cooperation are necessary elements of successful fertility regulation (UN, 1976: 29). While the first women's world conference managed to obtain official recognition of women's rights in terms of fertility decision-making, that achievement was attenuated by assertions of the sovereign right of states to determine their own population and birth control policies "compatible with cultural values prevailing in different societies" (UN, 1976: 29).

The Mexico Report reflects an instrumentalist approach to family planning along developmentalist and populationist lines. Arguments of these sorts can be found in a main preparatory document to the Mexico conference. The preparatory document states that the "wider inclusion of women in educational, social, political and economic activities tends to foster conditions leading to reduction of birth rates" (UN, 1975: 6). As a result, the Mexico Report recommends that

[in the elaboration and execution of population policies and programmes[,... governments are urged to pay particular attention to measures designed to improve the situation of women, especially with regard to their educational and employment opportunities" (UN, 1976: 29).]
The developmentalist approach is also found where the report recommends reductions in early childhood mortality in order to reduce fertility (UN, 1976: 28). As mentioned earlier, the developmentalist approach, although instrumentalist in nature, targets individual incentives in order to achieve demographic objectives. It is under this approach that the report recommends that family planning programmes be integrated with health and nutrition services. As such, the report mentions that population programmes undertaken with these objectives in mind will also raise the quality of family life and most importantly will reduce child and maternal mortality. This approach to the well-being of women has been referred to as the "family approach" and incorporates the "mother-child dyad" (Buvinic, 1986: 659; Moser, 1989: 1809).

In sum, the main achievement of the first women's conference in terms of family planning, was to obtain, through the acceptance of the Mexico Declaration by the UN General Assembly, a universal official recognition of women's rights to decide equally with men the number of children they wished to have. That conference did not express any ethical concerns with regard to the means and ends to be adopted.

These two outcomes of the Mexico conference reflect the accommodation process which took place in the early 1970s among First World feminists, the development community and the international community. For many First World feminists, birth control was a primary feminist objective per se (Çağatay et al., 1986: 408). In addition, a growing number of Southern states and most Northern ones had, by the 1970s, become increasingly concerned with population growth in the South. While this accommodation of objectives among various actors may have enabled the strong assertion of women's rights in family planning, the implementation of same revealed a much more complex situation than had been anticipated. The accommodation of the various rationales served to hinder the substantive objectives of the women's conferences.
First, family planning under the family approach to development was very similar to previous development programs focusing on women. Basically, such programmes were welfare programmes which viewed motherhood as the most important role for women in society (Buvinic, 1986: 659; Moser, 1989: 1809). As pointed out in Chapter III, not only was the welfare approach not perceived as a desirable one by Northern and Southern feminists, but the focus on women's reproductive role was also objectionable. Second, population control programmes focusing on women as the most appropriate agents of family planning did not adequately consider the social contexts of women (Young, 1993: 23, 24). Young cites as examples of the impact that social context can have on women's abilities to take advantage of family planning programmes "the resistance from husbands, from men and women of the older generation, and wives' social isolation and powerlessness." One of the main criticisms of the early WID approach by Third World women — exposed in Chapter III — was its exclusive focus on women thereby paying scant attention to gender relations in real-life situations. Also, in light of the focus of some actors on reaching particular demographic objectives, some of these programs were authoritarian while others did not provide adequate information about potential side effects of contraceptive methods offered. As a result, the incorporation of family planning as a component of development with population-control objectives aroused suspicion and opposition among Third World women (Çağatay et al., 1986: 408). Among their concerns was the perception that they were being used to try out new contraceptive methods or that Western pharmaceutical companies were dumping contraceptive products banned in the West in Southern countries (Young, 1993: 24).

From Mexico to Copenhagen

Preparatory documents for the 1980 Copenhagen conference on women reported that, in spite of an increase in the use of contraceptive methods since 1975, it was estimated that only
fifteen per cent of women in developing countries used some form of fertility regulation, and
that, on average, each woman gave birth to six live babies during her lifetime (UN, 1980b: 23;
UN, 1980c: 11, 16). While maternal and child mortality had declined, these improvements were
overshadowed by rapid population growth and explosive rural/urban migration which had resulted
in the deterioration of public health, the proliferation of slums, and overcrowding. Consequently,
as of 1980, the majority of women in developing countries were found to suffer from ill-health,
aNAemia and malnutrition. Nevertheless, UN statistics indicated that, while birth rates in
developing countries fell by 23.1 per cent between 1950-55 to 1975-89, mortality fell at an even
faster rate — by 47.8 per cent (Young, 1993: 11).

The WHO report for the Copenhagen conference identified the need to develop female-
specific data with regard to mortality and morbidity "including the impact of stress and fatigue
on women's health" which were undoubtedly caused by maternal malnutrition, heavy workload
and numerous and closely spaced pregnancies (UN, 1980c: 4-16). The WHO report referred to
a UN Secretary-General worldwide analysis where the following mid-decade assessment was
elucidated:

[T]he majority of developing countries still regard the reproductive function of
women as of the highest importance, in terms of the societal value placed on the
production of future labour, and as the principal basis for women's status in
society .... [S]trong sociocultural, psychological and political factors continued to
support high levels of reproduction .... [T]he problems women face in combining
their reproductive role and their heavy workload ... are cited as crucial problems
for most women in the world and as major impediments to raising their economic
status .... [Without changes] women [would] continue to face difficulties in
carrying out their roles and achieving personal satisfaction and fulfilment as
individual human beings (UN, 1980c: 35).

The focus of the WHO report is clearly on the desirability of family planning as an end
in itself in light of its benefit to women's well-being — rather than in terms of demographic
objectives to be attained through developmentalist means. The report also stressed the importance of increasing men’s sense of responsibility toward fertility regulation.

However, the 1980 Copenhagen report places much less emphasis on family planning than did the 1975 Mexico report. The subdued tone of the Copenhagen Report with regard to family planning is undoubtedly a reflection of the tensions between First World and Third World women referred to in the preceding chapter and which, as explained above, evidently included the issue of family planning. Nevertheless, the views relating to the desirability of family planning expressed in the WHO preparatory report appear in the Copenhagen report as well. This was a departure from the first women’s world conference. The appearance of the necessity to involve men is also stressed, although not to the extent that it would come to be in later conferences.

The Copenhagen report noted that the most visible achievement of the mid-decade was the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the General Assembly in 1979. As mentioned in Chapter II, the Convention includes the right of women to determine the number and spacing of their children. The Convention which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, came into force in 1981 with twenty ratifications; by 1985 thirty-nine states were party to the Convention and by August 1994 the number had swelled to 134 states (Pietilä and Vickers, 1990: 123, 124; 1994 World Survey: 3).

Several conclusions can be drawn after considering the developments which occurred in the field of family planning during the first five years of the Decade for Women. In spite of unmet expectations with regard to the dissemination of family planning, some improvements seem to have taken place in terms of reduced birth rates. As mentioned in chapters II and III, the Copenhagen Conference was impeded to some extent by NIEO rhetoric and tensions between First and Third World women. A very low level of consensus was achieved and this accounts for the scant references to family planning. These occurrences may have provided an opportunity
for the WHO perspective to appear in the final Copenhagen conference report. In any event, the door was opened to an alternative rationale regarding the ends of family planning. The instrumentalist approach to family planning, although not directly questioned, is nevertheless replaced with one that is closer to being an intrinsic approach.

From Copenhagen to Nairobi

A year before the Nairobi women’s conference, another population conference took place in Mexico from August 6 to 14, 1984. The timing of these conferences provides an opportunity to assess the impact that the women’s conferences had on other intergovernmental fora. As well, population conferences provide an assessment of progress made in terms of demographic goals.

The Mexico population conference report estimated that, by 1984, the overall world population growth rate had declined (UN, 1984f: 49). However, the report pointed out that, whereas fertility rates in several countries of Asia and Latin America had experienced rapid declines, they remained quite high in Africa and Western Asia. A 1991 study published for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and edited by its executive director, Nafis Sadik, discusses these results by region (Sadik, 1991: 256-372). The regions considered are sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States (viz. North Africa and Western Asia), Asia and the region including Latin America and the Caribbean. At the 1974 Bucharest population conference, many African countries expressed pro-natalist views. It was not until 1984 that a change was noticed when forty-four African countries acknowledged that family planning was a major component of social and economic development as well as a health and human-rights issue. As of 1974, only two Arab countries had adopted policies to reduce fertility. By the late 1980s, slow and sporadic

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15 Increased awareness among policy makers of the relevance of population issues to development; new data that revealed Africa’s high and increasing fertility rates, high mortality rates and urban migration; adverse economic situations, desertification and sporadic droughts all contributed to this changed perception regarding population policies (Sadik, 1991: 256-61).
change was in evidence. The study divides the Arab states into four groups: (i) four countries which had explicit population policies; (ii) six countries which did not have population policies but had accommodated family planning within maternal and child health (MCH) services; (iii) three countries which did not have population policies because they focused only on economic development; and (iv) the balance of the countries in the region which had definite pro-natalist views. In comparison, as of the Bucharest conference in 1974, seventeen Asian countries had adopted population policies and, by 1991, almost all countries had family planning programmes. In fact, according to the UNFPA, it was the Asian countries which kept the population issues alive and pressured for international forums. As of 1991, almost all of Latin American and Caribbean governments had formulated and implemented population policies of some sort. However, this had not always been the case. The reason given for these fertility reductions was that the region had experienced a demographic transition similar to that of developed countries.

Several observations stem from these mixed results. Reductions in fertility rates exhibit a strong correlation between government position on population issues and fertility levels — except in cases where a demographic transition has taken place. Therefore, governments’ willingness to adopt family planning policies — and thus state sovereignty — are crucial factors to be considered. Governments that had displayed either antinatalist or pronatalist policies had resorted to authoritarian population policies. Examples such as China’s one child policy and the Bangladesh crash family planning program under the 1980-85 Second Five Year Plan\textsuperscript{16} were mentioned with regard to the former position, while pre-1989 Romania under the pro-natalist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu was an example of the latter. State sovereignty must therefore be

\textsuperscript{16} Under the Bangladeshi programme, family planning workers had to fulfil quotas of implementation. Punitive sanctions and rewards were used to ensure compliance. In addition, the army began a campaign of compulsory male and female sterilization (Jiggins, 1994: 151).
accounted for as a mitigating factor with respect to the accessibility and quality of family planning. In this sense, the ratification of the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* by 134 states (as of 1994) should be considered to have been a major achievement of the women's world conferences. A survey of pronatalist states or states in the Arab region that did not implement any form of family planning supports this conclusion. Of the twelve Arab states that expressed negative attitudes toward population policies, only two had ratified the Convention by 1994.\textsuperscript{17} This result demonstrates not only the relevance of such documents of international law but also the significance of the achievement inherent in the number of states signatories to it.

Whereas the 1980 Copenhagen women's conference was characterized by a departure from instrumentalist approaches to family planning, it apparently did not succeed in influencing the 1984 Mexico population conference on that issue. This did not prevent the Secretary-General of the subsequent Nairobi women's world conference to address the Mexico population conference as follows: "women should not only be regarded as agents for population policies or tools for family planning programmes but also as beneficiaries of the type of development that respond[s] to their needs, values and aspirations" (UN, 1984f: 65). On the other hand, whereas the 1974 Bucharest population conference never mentioned the right of women to decide upon the number of children they will have, the 1984 Mexico population conference report talks almost exclusively about the right of women to decide rather than that of "couples" or "couples and individuals." There are grounds to conclude that the women's conferences which took place in

\textsuperscript{17} This result is derived from a comparison between the list of states taken from the UNFPA 1991 regional survey (Sadik, 1991) and the list of states reported in the *1994 World Survey* (UN, 1994a: 15) that were signatories to the Convention. States with pronatalist views or those that did not have family planning policies were: Bahrain, Djibouti, Iraq, Kuwait, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Saudia Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates. Only Iraq and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya signed the Convention.
Mexico and Copenhagen paved the way for changes in the rhetoric espoused within a broader arena.

The resurgence of religious fundamentalism coupled with the emergence of pro-life movements around the world had profound implications for the 1984 population conference in Mexico city and the 1985 world conference on women in Nairobi. At the Mexico population conference, one of the major contributors to family programmes in developing countries — the United States — issued its "Mexico City Policy" by which it announced that it would cut funds to the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and Family Planning International Assistance (FPAI) (Sai, 1993: 307; Tinker and Jaquette, 1987: 423; Çağatay et al., 1986: 407). The US delegation to the Mexico population conference is reported to have taken a strong position with regard to family planning by making statements to the effect that "more people did not mean less economic growth; ... that population growth had been an essential element in American progress; ... [and that] if poor nations had a population problem, it was the result of the humanitarian efforts of the United States and other countries" (Jiggins, 1994: 170).

These events provided grounds for First World and Third World women to come together on the issue of family planning at the Nairobi conference. Together, they supported a resolution which opposed the cutting of U.S. funding, denounced the activities of pro-life groups, and requested safe and accessible methods of family planning (Tinker and Jaquette, 1987: 423; Çağatay et al., 1986: 407). In part, the resolution read as follows:

The so-called "Pro-Life" lobby ... has been trying to ride on the backs of Third World women by using the fact that we have criticized unsafe family planning methods. They are using our words to lobby for the cutoff of family planning services in Third World countries .... We reject the domination of one country in

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18 The IPPF was established in 1952 and is the largest international private organization involved in family planning (UN, 1994e: 127).
the family planning area and its use of economic manipulation to coerce other governments (cited in Tinker and Jaquette, 1987: 423).

In light of the lack of consensus of previous conferences on women on this topic, the convergent views of First and Third World women was significant. As Tinker and Jaquette (1987: 423) observed, family planning moved from an issue of the North at the Mexico women's conference to a right of the South at Nairobi.

In spite of this apparent setback — which nevertheless turned out to be a catalyst to the international women's movement — the question of whether any progress had been made during the Decade for Women remains to be addressed. In order to answer this question, I turn to the preparatory documents of the 1985 Nairobi conference on women.

The report of the Secretary General to the Nairobi women's conference was based upon replies to the "United Nations Questionnaire to Governments" provides relevant information to the analysis. The replies of sixty-two governments representing every region of the world were used to produce the report. Governments were asked whether, since 1975, they had established or strengthened family planning policies or programmes in terms of information, education and provision of facilities. Not only did responses lead the analysts to reach positive overall conclusions, but they added that "[m]any family planning programmes [had] been introduced in the interest of maternal and child health and in the spirit of human rights rather than as a means of achieving a decline in fertility" (UN, 1984b: 3).

Nevertheless, while the report concluded that family planning increasingly considered the needs of women, "formal institutionalization of the perspective of women in formulating and implementing population policies, while occurring slowly and steadily, [was] not complete in any of the regions or at all levels of development" (UN, 1984b: 78).
Another report of the Secretary General (UN, 1984c: 37) acknowledged the fact that it was not possible to accurately weigh the progress achieved over the Decade in light of the economic and social setbacks that had occurred at the same time.\footnote{In Chapter II, I described the impact of the debt crisis and the Structural Adjustment Programs on Southern countries and I noted that by the time the Nairobi conference took place, these issues were beginning to be noticed.} It was observed that recessionary conditions in the world had increased difficulties considerably with regard to the provision of human and financial resources for family planning. Due to this situation, the recommendation was made to rely on community participation and, more particularly, on activities carried out by women's groups and organizations.

A much less positive outcome from the perspective of the advocates of women as a constituency of development is contained in the observation that "it [was] in their roles as mothers that the plight of women in health matters [had] finally gained a greater degree of recognition from men" (UN, 1984c: 38).

The Nairobi Report clearly addressed all the problems surrounding family planning implementation revealed during the Decade for Women. As such, significant departures from the previous women's conference can be observed. The first consists in the appearance of the notion of reproductive rights. While not yet expressed precisely in these terms, the Nairobi report clearly states that the ability of women to control their fertility is a basic human right and that such ability should be provided "irrespective of government policies" (UN, 1986: 39). The second departure from the previous conferences on women is the stronger insistence on the necessity of involving men in family planning. Specifically, the report seems to acknowledge the weakness inherent in focusing solely on women in such matters: "[D]ecision-making regarding family size and responsibilities, should be re-examined with a view to a better sharing
of responsibilities between men and women" (UN, 1986: 32). A call for greater accessibility, information and education for both men and women is clearly expressed throughout the report. Another novelty in the Nairobi report is an expression of need for organizations responsible for the distribution of contraceptive methods to include all medically approved and appropriate methods.

As mentioned in Chapter III, Third World women's voices are manifest throughout the Nairobi report. Requests for safer family planning definitely addressed their concerns; recognition of local women's organizations while reflecting the grass-roots experiences of Third World women also addressed the WID efficiency theme that coincided with the emergence of the SAPs; and the request for men's involvement reflected the gender and socio-cultural dimensions stressed by Third World feminists. Most significantly, the instrumentalist approach to family planning is virtually nonexistent. Rather, the objectives of family planning reflect a concern for women's health and the need to provide them freedom from numerous pregnancies so that they may enjoy other rights due them. The DAWN preparatory report to the Nairobi conference is clearly critical of instrumentalist approaches to family planning and warns that: "Programs that do not take the interests of women into account are unlikely to succeed" (DAWN, 1985: 42).

From Nairobi to Beijing

The objective of treating women as a constituency of development was to redress women's increasing marginalization in developing countries. Some indicators of marginalization consist in a greater incidence of illiteracy, poverty and ill-health among women relative to men. Thus far in this chapter, I have used the example of population policies as it related to the idea of women as a constituency of development advocated in the women's conferences. The
analytical framework included the ethical objectives developed at the conferences as well as direct development objectives such as increased education, accessibility to safe family planning and fertility reductions. It was observed that population policies were implemented in an instrumental fashion focusing on increased female education and lowered child mortality as a means to reduce fertility rates. The ethical aspect of such means of fertility reduction was increasingly and consistently criticized in the world conferences on women. In spite of the fact that the advocates of women as a constituency of development rejected instrumentalist population policies, twenty years after the first world conference on women took place, tangible progress was recorded in several areas, arguably because some of their development objectives coincided with those of the developmentalist approach to family planning.

Statistical indicators and the ethical approaches to family planning exposed in the preparatory documents to the Cairo population conference document provide impressive results. Statistical indicators reveal that, as of 1994, fifty-five per cent of couples in developing regions used some method of family planning—a fivefold increase since the 1960s (UN, 1994c: 37). Research reported in the latter document reveals a decrease from 6-7 children per family in the 1960s to about 3-4 in 1994 (UN, 1994c: 37). The regions with the smallest decreases in total fertility rate\(^{20}\) were Africa with a decline of 6.5 to 6.1 between 1970 and 1990, and Western Asia with a decline from 5.0 to 4.3. The Asian and Latin American and Caribbean regions experienced declines in total fertility rates from 5.5 to 3.1 during the same period (UN, 1994d: 43, 44). It was observed elsewhere (UN, 1994e: 38) that the world population growth rate had declined from 1.96 per cent per annum during 1970-1975 to 1.75 (lowest value) during

\(^{20}\) Total Fertility Rate is defined as: "the average number of children that would be born per women if all women lived to the end of their child-bearing years and bore children at prevailing levels of fertility" (Fathalla, 1993: 252).
1975-1990 and that it was expected to decline to 1.68 per cent during 1990-1995 — the lowest level since the end of World War II (UN, 1994e: 38). Likewise, it was projected that the annual population growth rate in the less developed regions would decrease from 2.38 per cent during 1970-1975 to 2.01 per cent during 1990-1995. Since the 1974 Bucharest population conference, the proportion of countries where government limited access to contraceptive methods had declined from 7.1 per cent in 1974 to 3.5 per cent in 1986 to 1.6 per cent in 1993. By 1993, 90.3 per cent of governments in the South provided support for contraceptive methods either directly or indirectly (UN, 1994e: 56).

While preparatory documents to the Beijing conference state that most of the goals set out in the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies have not been achieved, they point out that progress has been made in terms of girls' education: "[i]n most regions of the world, girls and boys now have the same access to primary and secondary education" (UN, 1994b:10). WISTAT provides the following statistics which reflect the number of girls for each 100 boys attending school in 1970 and 1990:

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Primary Educ. (No./100 ♂)</th>
<th>Secondary Educ. (No. ♂/100 ♂)</th>
<th>Post-Secondary (No. ♀/100 ♂)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia &amp; Pacific</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Caribbean</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the *1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, Table 3 (UN, 1994a: 7).
Nevertheless, the U.N. estimates that as of 1995, two thirds of the world’s illiterates are still women, and that of the 100 million children who do not have access to primary schooling, sixty million are girls (UN, 1995a: 27). According to the preparatory document to the Beijing conference one of the main obstacles to girls’ education remains customary practices such as early marriage and early pregnancies and almost exclusive responsibility for most domestic chores. In addition, it was observed that, while greater number of girls attend school, "curricula and teaching remain gender-biased ... [which] reinforces traditional female and male roles" (UN, 1995a: 28).

While progress in terms of primary health care has been noted, preparatory documents to the Beijing conference state that "recent and reliable data on mortality and morbidity of women and conditions and diseases particularly affecting women are not available" (UN, 1995a: 37). Nevertheless, "women’s health care is often deficient in various ways" (UN, 1995a: 37).

Impact Assessment

It would be inaccurate to conclude that such results were the doing of the world conferences on women alone. The aforementioned progress made in terms of literacy rates and family planning reflects the consensus opinion of several actors. Considering the concern of the international community regarding population growth in the early 1970s, population policies would have proceeded regardless of whether the world conferences on women had taken place or not. What is less certain is whether greater attention would have been paid to women’s rights regarding the number of children they wished to have, the quality of population programmes, or the increased emphasis on women’s health and well-being. Improvements were observed where a convergence between the objectives of the developmentalist approach to population programmes in the South and those of the women’s world conferences took place. That observation leads to
the conclusion that a concerted effort and support to these development objectives enabled improvements.

Using population policies as a case study, the following processes of accommodation between actors can be observed. Initially, a consensus took place on the issue of population growth which accommodated Northern feminists’ insistence on women’s equality with men under the law and thereby women’s right to decide upon the number of children they wished to have and governments’ legal responsibility to provide them with the means to do so. The development community’s concern with education and the developmentalist approach to population policies also coincided with liberal feminist focus on education and training in order to "integrate" women in development. The consensus which took place between Third and First World women in response to events that threatened family planning programmes resulted into another stage of accommodation. That process resulted in the recognition that Third World women’s concerns regarding gender relations within particular socio-cultural contexts and the quality of family planning programmes needed to be incorporated into population policies. Statistics quoted above demonstrate that some progress has been made in terms of female education, family planning and reduced fertility. The world conferences on women have also experienced legal achievements with the ratification and adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by a majority of countries.

In fact, the area where the least progress was made is that which focuses specifically on women’s health. Similarly, that is also the area where the least female-specific statistics have been developed in spite of the WHO requests to do so at the Copenhagen conference. Neither the developmentalist approach to population policies nor the Northern feminist idea of "integrating" women in development emphasize that development objective as a priority. Rather, primary health care has been emphasized within the family approach which aimed at reducing
child and maternal mortality. Nevertheless, while the aspirations expressed in the women’s conferences with regard to ethical implementation of population policies have not fully materialized, their concerns have influenced the ethical debates surrounding such development implementation. The most recent and noticeable change is reflected in the rhetoric used at the Cairo population conference. The ethical rhetoric which appeared with gradual intensity in the women’s world conferences echoes in the associated preparatory documents of the 1994 Cairo population conference:

Emphasis is increasingly being placed on the needs of users, not just on aggregate acceptor figures, and on human rights and health benefits, not just on the demographic impact of programs; there is increasing criticism of traditional target systems for family planning workers .... There is extensive recognition of the fact that incentive and disincentive schemes to lower ... fertility have only a marginal impact on fertility levels and in some cases are counter-productive (UN, 1994f: 53).

Demographic goals, while legitimately the subject of government development strategies, should not be imposed on family planning providers in the form of targets or quotas for the recruitment of clients .... [P]rogrammes should ... replace quantitative measures of performance with qualitative ones that take into account the perspectives of clients (UN, 1994c: 39).

In the previous sections of this chapter I illustrated the gradual evolution of the idea of women as a specific constituency of development with regard to population policies and the impact the world women’s conferences had on the broader community involved in that aspect of development. The rhetoric surrounding population issues, as many other issues dealt with in the women’s conferences, experienced gradual changes over the past twenty years. The convergence of development objectives among various actors provided room for action in spite of divergent theoretical and ethical premises. The world conferences on women influenced policy-making decisions at various national and international levels by drawing global attention on the impact that policies had on women. Whereas challenges lie ahead, the increased attention
drawn on women's condition from the 1970s onward contributed not only to improve the quality and quantity of development assistance focusing on women, but also curbed a process of increasing marginalization of women which stemmed from early development implementation. There is no doubt that the millions of women who no longer experience high numbers of pregnancies and the burden of supporting large numbers of infants and children have benefited from such achievements. Considering the theoretical and empirical correlations that have been established between education and lower fertility rates and improved health, one could expect that the increased number of girls who today have access to education will contribute to further improve these development objectives.

In the following section, I look at the role that each group of actors has played within the contexts described in Chapters II and III as they pertain to family planning projects implementation. From there I extrapolate, in light of current trends, the roles these actors are likely to play in the post-Beijing women's conference period and the opportunities that stem from their interaction.

From Beijing Onwards

In Chapter II, I exposed the constraints and capabilities of the first group of actors the thesis is looking at — the international community and the UN system. I exposed how North-South tensions revolving around the NIEO had affected states relations and the UN organizations involved in economic and social development; how Northern states had used their position of influence in organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank to channel development assistance to Southern debtors in a manner that was consistent with the rules of the LIEO. I used the example of structural adjustment policies to illustrate such development approaches and I
exposed their potential impact on women and the time it took on the part of all actors to realize and address the problems created by the SAPs.

According to a 1990 report of the UN Secretary General, the "consequences of the debt crisis are expected to be felt until the year 2000 if debt relief of sufficient magnitude is not provided soon" (UN, 1989: 11). Budget cuts in social programmes — as advocated by the SAPs — affect governments' ability to implement development projects such as family planning, accessibility to primary health care and education. For example, in Zimbabwe "government health spending fell by one third in the first three years of structural adjustment policies. The number of women dying in childbirth in the capital, Harare, doubled in the two years after adjustment from 101 in 1989 to 242 in 1991" (UN, 1995b: 47). Similarly, the primary health-care system was curtailed in one fifth of the African countries for which data were available while in Latin America and the Caribbean 14 out of 23 countries reported reduced per capita expenditures on health. A decline in per capita expenditures on health has also been linked to lowered standards of nutrition; both have been declining in some parts of developing world since the 1980s. Privatization — also encouraged by the SAPs — increased the costs of health care services and products thereby affecting accessibility to the poorest, most of whom are women. Less accessibility to public health care services also increase women's work since they usually are the ones who take care of the sick. The SAPs have not only affected health care services but also education. From 1979 to 1983, per capita expenditure on education decreased in 60 per cent of the Latin American countries (UN, 1989).

In addition, the proportion of international financial assistance devoted to population programmes has decreased from 2 per cent of total development assistance to 1.34 per cent (UN, 1994c: 72). As a result, recipient developing countries have increased their financial contributions to make up approximately 75 per cent of total expenditures on population
programmes. While such figures reveal the importance developing countries place on population policies, it was observed that they were facing increasing difficulties in securing adequate funding for their population programmes. This problem is compounded by the fact that additional resources are not only required now in order to satisfy unmet needs, but will be required in increasing levels in order to respond to future demand dictated by the growing population entering reproductive age.\textsuperscript{21} It is estimated that even if recipient countries covered two thirds of the future total costs, donor countries would need to provide complementary funding estimated at U.S. $4.4 billion (1993 U.S.$) in the year 2000 (UN, 1994c).

According to a recent *Globe and Mail* article, UN members attending the Cairo conference all agreed to increase world spending on population programmes (including reproductive health care) from the current U.S.$5 billion to U.S.$17 billion a year by the year 2000 (Stackhouse, 1995a:A13). However, the article points out that in spite of that pledge, a study conducted by the Washington-based group Population Action International says that "governments have yet to commit the money they said they would." Instead, Northern governments are cutting their official development assistance budgets. The same reporter wrote in another *Globe and Mail* article that, as a result of present Northern governments focus on budget deficits, existing projects are threatened (Stackhouse, 1995b: A1, 7, 8). The article cites as an example a 15-year-old World Bank nutrition project in the southern state of Tamil Nadu in India. The project provides funds to pay for a community health worker in every village, to provide safe-delivery kit to every pregnant woman and to give free school lunches to every child. The project is reported to have affected 43 million people over the past 15 years and reduced

\textsuperscript{21} It is estimated that presently at least 350 million couples world wide do not have access to modern family-planning methods, and that an additional 120 million women would be currently using some form of modern contraceptive method if such were available (UN, 1994c).
malnutrition from 12.3 per cent to 2.1 per cent of that area’s population — a statistic hardly matched by the rest of the country. The project is funded through the World Bank soft-loan window known as International Development Association (IDA). While IDA is up for its 11th renewal in 1996, it is estimated that its funding will be cut by as much as 30 per cent. The U.S. Senate budget committee is reported to have recently proposed to halve its contribution to the next IDA round while the House of Representatives called for the complete cancellation of IDA. The U.S. Congress even requested to slash U.S. contribution for the current programmes. Similarly, the recent budget of the Canadian Government cut the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) budget by 15 per cent and Canadian contributions to the four regional development banks by 40 per cent (Sanger, 1995: 1,2). As Northern countries experience budget deficits, there is increasing domestic support for the view that developing countries should rely on their own resources to address their socio-economic problems. As mentioned in chapter II, the third generation of structural adjustment programmes place a greater emphasis on "human investment” from which women could potentially benefit (UN, 1995b: 6, 56, 57). Since early 1994, the IMF has focused on social sector policies stressing the importance of improving women’s access to education, health care and family planning in its programmes and policy dialogues with member Governments.

Decreased development assistance funding may provide a window of opportunity to grassroots projects implemented through NGOs, thereby accommodating Third World empowerment approaches. If such projects are found to yield better results with less resources than the larger Official Development Assistance projects, NGOs and local development initiatives may be receiving increasingly larger shares of funding. For example, a 1990 World Bank progress report identified women’s cooperatives as potential future partners for the implementation of World Bank projects (The World Bank, 1990).
In Chapter III, I described the dynamics among the second group of actors this thesis is looking at — the advocates of women as a constituency of development and the development community — as these actors struggled to reach a consensus on the thematic components of the world conferences on women. I concluded that while considerable progress had been made in reaching some form of consensus and providing room for Third World women's perspectives, development implementation still reflected a Northern perspective. It was the WID approach that had dominated the implementation of the idea of women as a constituency of development. Nevertheless, Third World researchers and NGOs implemented development activities through grass-roots organizations with an "empowerment" approach, and they had gained increasing recognition.

The empowerment approach is critical of instrumental population policies that focus on women's education and children's health as a means to fertility reduction. The advocates of the empowerment approach feel that fertility concerns, like any other development issue, cannot be isolated from the cultural, political and economic contexts within which women live. They find that women's organizations that provide a wider range of support to women are more conducive to the improvement of women's condition. Strategies that consist in women's collective strength and consciousness raising enable women to prioritize the particular problems they need to tackle. Women then become "legitimate social actors" rather than passive recipients of welfare programmes or instruments of population policies (Sen, 1993: 369). Third World researchers claim that the implementation of such projects by NGOs in India and Bangladesh provide empirical evidence of success. These projects are mentioned in preparatory documents to the Beijing conference as examples of successful alternative approaches to development focusing on women. Organizations such as the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India or the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh work in a range of areas simultaneously, providing women with
support in areas as diverse as savings and credit, child care, health services and legal education and aid (Batiwala, 1994: 136).

However, it was observed in the previous chapter that the bulk of Official Development Assistance with a focus on women did not follow such approaches. Jahan (1995: 95, 96) reported that while there had definitely been a shift in the language used by development organizations such as the UNFPA "it [was] far from clear how much of this shift in language had actually been translated operationally into alternative policy and programme design." Rather, there was a concern that donors and development agencies were coopting the language of feminists and the women's movement.

While NGOs and grass-roots organizations have gained increased recognition, there is reason to believe that the advocates of the WID approach intend to prevail. Concerns of cooptation expressed by Third World feminists and the persistence of WID seem to be justified. Perusal of a preparatory document to the Fourth World conference on women reveals consistent references to WID at every level of development implementation. The background information that serves as an introduction to the document clearly appropriates the empowerment approach as a WID approach. The empowerment approach is included as part of the chronological description of the evolution of the WID rationales since 1970. Further along in that preparatory document, a section entitled "Implementation" states: "[t]he power of WID offices and national machinery ... should determine their influence on the policy debate .... There could be no effective WID policy at the grass-roots level without basic human rights such as freedom to associate, freedom of speech and freedom to criticize government policy direction .... Female education [is] perhaps the most important means of achieving the combined benefits of higher productivity, lower infant mortality and lower fertility" (UN, 1992: 3-10). While these are all worthy objectives in line with the women's agendas, they certainly do not reflect the essence of
the empowerment approach. This new focus on civil liberties is part of the new political agenda of Northern countries which aims at democratizing the South and have increasingly tied aid to such political aims since the demise of the Soviet Union. The WID advocates clearly demonstrate their intention to remain the driving force behind the idea of women as a constituency of development.

In this chapter I have illustrated the manner in which the changing social, political and economic situations exposed in chapters II and III have affected one aspect of development focusing on women. Similarly, I have shown how the various processes of accommodation between the various actors involved in these activities have contributed to bring about some results. The North-South dialogue which is taking place among women bring together particular agents in a manner never before experienced. That is, because Northern and Southern women have identified issues in common, they have bridged the North-South communication gap to a certain extent.

Processes of accommodation amongst actors similar to the ones exposed in this chapter will continue to occur. Issues such as the spreading of AIDS, international migration and environmental degradation will find common interests among the groups of actors involved in development. The women's world conferences have already established in the preparatory documents to the Beijing conference that women were at the centre of solutions to such emerging issues. In fact, as the United Nations systems is realizing that the growing number of world conferences share core issues, and as it is attempting to devise a system that will integrate these into a holistic global approach to economic and social development, the solutions offered by the women's conferences appear consistently (UN, 1995c). That is to say, the women's conferences
are no longer the only fora where women voice their concerns and solutions. Women have managed, over the past twenty years to gain international recognition as a specific constituency.
V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present thesis is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the idea of women as a specific constituency of development. I used the world conferences on women as a point of reference to see whether questions and solutions raised with regard to the focus on women in development succeeded in influencing changes in development practice and whether these changes had improved women's conditions. In order to do so I divided the actors involved in the conferences and in development into two groups. The first group was made up of the UN actors and the second was the advocates of women as a constituency of development and the development community.

Chapter II revealed that the South-North debate dominated relations amongst states as well as development implementation. However, the women's conferences had eventually avoided this kind of rhetoric by reaching a consensus on commonalities and differences among Northern and Southern women. The advocates of women as a constituency of development had devised alternative development models, objectives and rhetorical principles underlying development approaches focusing on women. While there were serious weaknesses in the WID approach to development and whereas Third World women's approach had gained recognition, there appeared to be few signs of any significant shift toward a broad implementation of the latter approach in the immediate future. Nevertheless, Southern feminist development research and implementation had permeated and significantly influenced the world conferences on women and the development community. In addition, Third World development projects demonstrated that their novel approach to development had provided positive results for the women involved. The significant progress made in terms of specific development goals such as increased female education and
usage of family planning methods were due to an overlapping consensus among different actors involved in development.

In concluding, there are strong grounds to assert that the world conferences on women were beneficial and successful in permanently placing women as a specific constituency on the international agenda. The idea of women as a constituency of development contributed not only to channel development resources to women but also generated research and implementation of novel approaches to development that indicate promising outcomes for women.

Can we therefore conclude that Southern women are better off today than they were in 1975? In spite of results such as those I exposed in chapter IV, neither the conferences nor feminist researchers feel that women are better off. In fact, while they recognize that gains were made in terms of greater understanding and awareness of gender issues, strengthened women’s movement, multiplication of organizations and networks, clearer articulation of the women’s agenda, adoption of mandates and policies, and alternative grassroots initiatives, the bottom line for them is that "poverty among women has increased even within the richest countries resulting in what has become known as the ‘feminization of poverty’" (UN World Survey, 1989.: 5). These advocates of women as a constituency of development recognize, as I have shown in chapter IV, that tangible results occurred when the objectives of the advocates of women and those of other actors involved in development overlapped. However, they do not consider such gains satisfactory since, in their view, these gains were not made in terms of women’s strategic interests. In fact, such self-assessment reflects the changes which have occurred in the rationales that explain the condition of women and as such the future agenda of the women’s movement. Actors’ assessment of their achievements will differ in the same manner that their perspectives and priorities differ.
In the 1990s, the advocates of women no longer pursue isolated objectives focusing either on women’s integration in development or their equality with men. They are questioning the roots of their condition at a much deeper level of societies’ organization — domestic as well as international. That agenda is so ambitious in the profound social transformations it seeks, that one must take into consideration the feasibility of such objectives in the immediate future, and therefrom the disappointments or frustrations these actors have expressed.

That observation is not meant to minimize or devalue the assessment or future objectives of the advocates of women as a constituency of development. Rather, it is meant to suggest that such assessments must be made within a broader perspective. An assessment of the progress made in terms of development assistance directed at women must take into account the overall development assistance given Southern countries over time. As early as 1964, industrialized countries had agreed through a UN resolution to provide the equivalent of one per cent of their Gross National Product in Official Development Assistance — after twenty-five years only one country had met that target (Head, 1994: 42). As I have exposed in this thesis, financial flows to Southern countries have been less than adequate — at times negative — and current trends do not indicate positive prospects. As pointed out in chapter III, the objectives of the advocates of women as a constituency of development meant that scarce development resources had to be redistributed. That choice seems to have partially taken place where it accommodated as many actors as possible. In addition, caution should be applied when interpreting statistics. While it is estimated that the number of people living below the poverty line increased from 1 billion to 1.2 billion between 1985 and 1993, we must take into account the fact that population increased by 1 billion in the 1980s, and that one factor linked to increased poverty is urban migration (UN, 1994a: 31, 41). Urbanization in developing countries increases poverty both in the city and in the countryside. Feminization of rural poverty is due not only to restructuring policies but also
to environmental degradation, increased male out-migration and the concomitant increase in female-headed households (UN, 1994a: 34). An assessment of the idea of women in development must therefore be placed within and be tempered by the broader context of official development assistance flows and changing variables that affect women’s lives.

Development as defined in this thesis concerns a variety of issues which are interrelated and involve a number of actors with different priorities. As such, one of the main challenges of development is to find solutions that will break the vicious circle inherent in the impact issues and actors have on one another. The focus on women may very well be one of the dents in this vicious circle. The promotion of increased standards of living through economic, financial, social and political manipulations is as complex as the number of variables inherent in these human activities, their interrelationships and the impact they have on one another. The predictability of social science models of development have been deceived time and again by human agency. The early development models emanating from the North were based in a linear concept of Northern progress. The South was expected to emulate these models and it was expected that Southern populations would thereafter enjoy higher standards of living. These models have eluded, for the most part, their implementors. While early development approaches focused on aggregate numbers in terms of people and economic growth, they failed to identify some important factors that counteracted their efforts. As the world conferences on women revealed, development issues are numerous and overlapping. For example, can someone be expected to reap the benefits of education if she or he suffers from chronic malnutrition or ill health? Can women be expected to practice family planning if the few children they will have run a high risk of dying and if they must rely on their children’s help for domestic and agricultural chores? How effective can family planning be if women’s status is defined in terms of their fertility? The marginalization of women have negative repercussions on national development objectives. Whether these
repercussions are interpreted in terms of the health or education of national human capital, or in terms of increased demographic pressures on national institutions and the environment there is no doubt that improved living conditions of women will benefit societies in the long term and greatly enhance development objectives. In the many vicious circles which development projects attempt to break, the most we can hope for is to create dents. This the world conferences on women have definitely achieved by providing invaluable feedback on the numerous variables that impact women's lives and, therefore, national development objectives.

As such, the thesis demonstrated that overlapping objectives among various actors involved in development greatly enhanced progress toward those objectives. Previously, the ultimate recipients of development projects seldom participated in project design whether to assess what they perceived their challenges to be or to define their future society. The world conferences on women seem to have played an important role in shaking this traditional approach to development. Third World women questioned approaches imposed upon them and developed alternatives designed by themselves. While the North-South/top-down approach seems to prevail, there are indications that that process is being altered. The communication and identities created between women from rich and poor countries and the resulting determination to identify common concerns and common goals is a definite departure from traditional North-South relations.

Some have commented that as the end of the Twentieth Century approaches the majority of developing countries are pondering over the same questions raised in the 1950s: whether they can achieve economic growth and social development in the present system and if so how. Indeed, there appears to have been little improvements made in terms of the numbers of individuals affected by poverty. As various actors have been grappling with the complexities of development for the past fifty years, solutions have come and gone, economic models and development paradigms have succeeded and failed. As Head (1991: 22) pointed out, "the crafting
of a mutually beneficial dynamic relationship cannot wait for the emergence of a brilliant universal accord, it must emerge from a series of 'creative patchworks'.” The UN world conferences offer the opportunity to devise such patchworks and the ideas of women as a specific constituency of development expressed therein have already offered much in that sense.
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