Women's Economic Roles and the Development Paradigm

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Introduction

Women were invisible in early economic development theory. First, the worldview prevailing in Europe and the United States in the post-World War II era which assumed women did not work was incorrectly perceived as universal. Secondly, the economic constructs based on this assumption proposed the household as an economic unit whose members were well served by its patriarch. Finally, this lack of cultural variability could be traced to some extent to inaccurate information about women's economic roles and gender relationships in developing countries.

Development theorists took as given this view of gender and utilized it for designing the stages of growth that would lead to modernization. Liberal economists wished to counter Marxism with an alternative inevitable path, but they tended to dismiss in importance of women in both the economic and caring economies. Marxist theory does recognize women's importance in reproducing the labor force as well as their work yet provisions for assisting women in their caring functions were seldom adequate in socialist countries. Both these economic constructs lacked an understanding of women's reality, especially in developing countries.

The social construction of gender reflected in development theory was increasingly challenged by women in both developed and developing countries. Scholars documented the work that women did and concluded that many development programs were having an adverse impact on women. As the women's movement grew, women demanded greater emphasis on their rights. Rapid socio-economic transitions altered family structure which called for greater attention to gender relationships. Gender sensitive programs and policies further changed development programs. Activists today are working to ensure that rhetoric is matched with expenditures and with greater political power and representation for women.

This chapter traces the evolution of the development paradigm in response to the recognition of women's economic roles. It charts the shifts in thinking and in action, and relates them to developments in scholarly research, to activism in developing and developed countries, and to global fora which helped change the paradigm.

Alternative Voices

The rhetoric of democracy and equality espoused during the war resonated in both former colonies and in industrial countries. Constitutions of newly independent countries granted women's

suffrage. China passed the 1950 Marriage Act to counter traditional practices (Zuckerman 2000). Independence movements brought women to the forefront of struggle, especially when the male leaders were jailed. Many women were given high level positions at home and in the United Nations in the newly independent countries (Tinker 2004b). International women's organizations participated in the Economic and Social Council and lobbied the UN to include social issues in the UN First Development Decade 1960-1970 that focused on infrastructure and industrial projects. In 1964, Sweden became the first western country to alter its development policies explicitly to include women: USSR had initiated a few such projects earlier in the decade. Activists spurred the US Congress to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973 and require the US Agency for International Development to administer its programs with a view "to integrate women in national economies of foreign countries, thus improving their status and assisting the total development effort." A similar resolution was passed by the UN General Assembly in Dec. 1974 (Tinker 1990).

Ester Boserup studied the introduction of cash crops into subsistence economics in Africa in *Woman's Role in Economic Development.* Not only did policies that privileged cash crops result in increasing women's work in the fields but, income from these crops that flowed exclusively to the men, allowed men to seek higher paying jobs in urban areas with no obligation to support their rural families (Boserup 1970). In this manner, development programs frequently had an adverse impact on women's work and also contributed to the disintegration of the family which led to increasing poverty among women headed-households (Buvinic and Youssef 1978; Chant 1997; Tinker 1976a, 1976b). Maruja recorded the conflict between Northern donors and local NGOs in her study of indigenous women of the Andes (2006). Ghodsee links the limited success of "Women in Development" or WID projects in post-communist Europe to their situation within free-market capitalism rather than a more socialistic welfare state closer to the Scandinavian model (2003).

Research about women's work in subsistence economies recorded the many hours women actually worked carrying out such survival activities as growing, harvesting, processing, and preparing food as well as carrying water and fuelwood. These time allocation studies clearly show that women work more hours than men; further, while men had some leisure time, women did not. Babies were on their backs as they worked; girls assisted their mothers as soon as they could walk. Many assistance projects failed because they ignored the fact that the real rural energy crisis was women's time.[1] Time-allocation studies also distinguished between societies that utilized bride price and those that practiced the dowry system.   In female agricultural systems, women's work is highly valued and requires a payment to the bride's family to compensate for losing her labor. Where male farming systems predominate, women are a burden on the family and must pay a dowry to the husband.

Still, development agencies continued to conceive of programs that ignored cultural variations, political considerations, and women's work demands (and undervalued women's work). Even within a country, similar projects often had opposing consequences on different groups of women.   Buvinic (1986) complained that projects often "misbehave" because elite women benefitted more that the poor. Boserup (1990) noted how age- class-race hierarchies modify women's roles in different types of societies. Papanek and Sen both emphasized how women's lower entitlements both within families and society affect the efficacy of development programs (Papanek 1990; Sen 1990).

The UN World Conference on Population in 1974 brought together scholars who had been studying population trends with activists trying to implement family planning. This population conference, along with the Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, began a series of official UN world conferences dealing with emerging issues addressed in the original UN

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[1] For a review of many time allocation studies see Tinker, 1987.

Charter. Participants in these conferences included national delegations and Non-Governmental Organizations [NGOs] in consultative status to the UN. In addition, all arranged a Forum where a wide range of groups interested in the topic could debate. Women learned to lobby delegates at the UN meeting to include women in pertinent sections of the conference document. For example, at the World Food Conference, held in Rome in 1974, women staff of the FAO ensured that women's roles in food production were recognized (Pietila and Vickers 1990: 82-83).

The 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year, provided the first opportunity for a discussion about the impact of development on women. Tinker organized an international seminar of women and men scholars, practitioners, and activists concerned with development which preceded the official conference. Most participants became advisors to their country's delegations; others organized panels at the NGO Tribune, as the Forum was called. As a result, many recommendations from the workshops were incorporated into the plan of Action.[2] Delegates argued that one conference was insufficient to address women's inequalities; a decade for women was declared, with conferences in 1980 and 1985 (Allan et al 1995). The International Women's Tribune Center was established in New York City which published a newsletter so that activists could keep in touch; they also compiled resource books for women's groups in developing countries (Walker 2006). The IWY conference proved to be an incubator for a global women's movement (Antrobus 2004).

As with the subsequent women's conferences, political maneuvering by countries concerning issues outside the purview of the conference frequently conflicted with the desires women to focus on topics more closely related to women's concerns. While some women were convinced that governments used women's conferences as a proxy for global debates because women lacked the political muscle to contest, other women welcomed such debates as an indication that women as citizens needed to be part of such discussions (Jaquette 1995; Snyder 1995; Tinker and Jaquette 1987).

The growing disconnect between Northern feminists, especially Americans like Betty Freidan, and women from the South was highlighted at the Mexico City NGO Tribune and caused by the assumption of universality of women's issues by American feminists. Lucille Mair, as secretary-general of the 1980 Copenhagen Conference, funded a series of research papers written by women from the South to balance the dominance of documentation by Northern scholars. Increasingly, the WID approach of integrating women into development was met with the question: into what? Mair argued in "Women: A Decade is Time Enough" that such integration, far from benefitting women, was actually making them work harder (1986). Elise Boulding cautioned that integration into the present world order only increased women's dependency. She opted for a "strategic separatism that frees up the potentials of women for economic and social experiments on a small scale, outside the patriarchal social order," (1991:23). Socialist feminists criticized the capitalist project, echoing many of the complaints made by WID advocates about the values and biases in liberal development thought. The women's social movement became a transnational network of diverse groups and interests encompassing class, religious, and geographic variations (Moghadam 1994, 2005).

In 1983, Devaki Jain presented a paper at the OECD/DAC WID group: "Development as If Women Mattered: Can Women Build a New Paradigm?" This concern blossomed into series of meetings among women scholars from the South who drafted the influential *Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era: Development, Crisis, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspective.* This book was unveiled at the Nairobi Women's conference in 1985. Project participants formed a new

[2] For papers from the AAAS Seminar on Women in Development, workshops reports, and a list of participants see Tinker and Bo Bramsen 1976.

global organization, DAWN, to continue the presence of women of the South in the development debate (Jain 2004).

As the women's movement expanded, women's organizations began to hold world conferences themselves. A 1974 feminist meeting in Frankfurt, Germany, demanded increased surveillance over international prostitution rings and called for a ban on female circumcision. Aware of the "male dominated transnational-controlled press," *Women's International Bulletin* was started by Isis, a documentation center based in Geneva and Rome, to enable women from North and South to exchange grassroots experiences (Portugal 2004: 105). Today, Isis operates out of Santiago, Chile; Kampala, Uganda; and Manila, the Philippines.

A World Congress for International Women's Year, convened in East Berlin in October 1975, was a hybrid conference. Organized by the Women's International Democratic Federation to celebrate its 30th anniversary, the meeting was planned with the support of the United Nations and attended by the UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim who thanked the WIDF for first suggesting the idea to celebrate IWY. Participants included many Asian and African women and men who had attended workshops in the socialist countries that promoted integrating women into revolutionary causes, as opposed to the WID model designed to incorporate women into a capitalist model (Ghodsee 2012).

All this activity of women around the world underscored the critical role women were playing in developing countries while at the same time challenging the WID model.

Shifts in Programs and Policies by Development Agencies: Women, Work and Income

Advocates for women in development emphasized programs which recognized women's economic roles. Previous programming for women was concentrated on their roles as mothers and was funded by well-funded population programs. To avoid the welfare approach to women, WID encouraged separate offices, or machinery in UN parlance, to design new ways to fund, monitor, and carry out programs that would integrate women into the economy of the country. They argued such projects would be both more effective and efficient if women were included. This was a tactical decision given the somewhat chilly attitude toward women's rights held by agency administrators.

Activists, in and outside agencies, criticized the development policies and programs being pursued. For example, agricultural projects promoted cash crops; research showed clearly that introducing these crops increased women's work. Further, cultural blindness often led to teaching African women to can foods or set a table while teaching men to farm. In both Asia and Africa women farmers were taught to sew in countries where men were the tailors. Cooperatives were introduced to replace marketing boards under the assumption that producers and land owners were the same. For three years the coffee production in Kenya fell after women no longer received payment for their crop, the funds going instead to the male who was usually in the city. Efforts to provide new improved cookstoves were mired in cultural assumptions about fuel types, efficiencies at the micro level, and women's time constraints. As a result, few of these cookstoves were adopted by rural women.[3]

Such programs were conceived in response to the demonstrable need of women for money as monetization expanded. More successful were projects assisting women who were already working. Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), started by Ela Bhatt in Ahmedabad, India, set up a bank in 1974 to provide loans for members. Similarly, the impetus for the Grameen Bank came when

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[3] See Tinker and Jaquette 1987 for an exhaustive critique of inappropriate technology.

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Mohammed Yunus observed a woman making chairs one at a time. He realized that credit would allow her to increase her output and buy goods in bulk. The Grameen model evolved into organizing women so that the group became collateral for loans to set up microenterprises.

For feminists, the philosophical distinctions between SEWA and Grameen are critical. SEWA organized women by their existing jobs, insisted they become literate, and trained members to become leaders. In contrast, the Grameen Bank is headed by men with a largely male staff. While SEWA is organized around a union philosophy, Grameen has a strong social movement foundation. Members are expected to follow Sixteen Decisions that include calisthenics, birth control, and refusal to pay dowry or for lavish weddings.   Use of loans are also controlled by the bank. Such a "father knows best" approach reflects a patriarchal mentality. Devaki Jain, reviewing income-generating projects in India to assess how the nature of leadership influenced women's agency concludes: "All work did not necessarily empower women… It took something more, and that seemed to be feminist leadership," (Jain 2004: 132).

None of these microenterprises would be considered work under early ILO guidelines. In the 1970s, the ILO did begin a series of studies on the informal sector which it defined as an enterprise with five or more employees. Because women tended to be sole or family workers, this definition once again excluded them.   Market women in West Africa had been the subject of studies for years, yet their considerable income fell outside definitions of employment. A seven country study of Street Foods was greatly influential in influencing policies at the ILO (Tinker 1997). The study underscored how cultural factors influence the roles women and men play in the enterprises and identified methods to increase both the income for vendors and the safety of the food sold

Gender roles became even more central to the debate over the informal sector in the 1980s when industries around the world began to "informalize" their workforce (Portes et al 1989; Rakowski et al 1994). The impact of industrial homework on social relations has been profound (Beneria and Roldan 1987). Some women were employed in assembly centers; other women made the same goods at home (Boris and Prugl 1996).   The line between formal and informal work became convoluted (Tinker and Prugl 1997). How to collect data on women's employment in the informal sector is central to United Nations statistical indices, especially as they are utilized in both the Human Development Report and the Gender Inequality Index.

Organized Women Move Beyond Economics

While development agencies continued to follow the WID approach of integrating women into economic programs for efficiency reasons, the expanding women's movement was asserting women's rights as the basis for broadening programs beyond the economic sector.   Twenty years after its 1980 founding, the Association for Women in Development (AWID), expanded its focus by renaming to the Association for Women's Rights in Development. Maintaining its acronym, AWID today is the global umbrella organization leading the struggle for women's human rights. Although women's income was shown to increase women's bargaining power within the family and to diminish the incidence of domestic violence, other research showed that men often reduced family support as women increased theirs (Blumberg 1991; Dwyer and Bruce 1988; Sen 1990).   Formal sector jobs pay women less than men; women in the informal sector were often compelled by household responsibilities to work fewer hours (Molyneux 1985; Tinker 1997). This unequal income particularly affected women headed-households.

As the socio-economic transition continued, poverty increased among female headship households.   Structural adjustment policies in Latin America (Safa and Antrobus 1992) and Africa (Ladner 1987) which decimated social programs and stifled growth tended to exacerbate this trend toward the "feminization of poverty."[4] A major resource for women is control of land. Traditional farming systems allocated usufruct rights to women, but the male controlled ownership and could evict widows.   In post-genocide Rwanda, distant relatives often ejected grandmothers caring for grandchildren. The AIDS epidemic had a similar result in Uganda. Although both countries have recently passed laws to remedy this situation, enforcement is lax (Lee-Smith and Trujillo 2006).   The Landesa Center for Women's Land Rights "champions women's secure access to land."[5] A pioneering project in India has arranged micro-plots that include women's names on land titles: the plots are too small to threaten existing landholders (World Bank, FAO, IFAD 2009).

Housing is even more critical for women's empowerment: a home not only provides shelter but a site of income and space for growing or raising food.   Further, owning a home allows women to eject abusive partners, reducing not only domestic violence but also lowering the incidence of AIDS. [6] Costa Rica passed a law in 1990 that guaranteed women's ownership rights to any home subsidized by the government: if the woman was married the house was registered under both names, but if she was not married, the house was in her name alone. In Bangladesh, where floods regularly wash away traditional rural huts with their bamboo poles and matting sides, the Grameen Bank granted loans to its members. Before the loan could be granted, however, her husband had to deed to her the land in this virilocal village where the house was to be built thus ensuring she had rights to stay in her tiny house even if the husband migrated to the city (Tinker 1999).

The culmination of women's demand for equality came at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights when the body adopted the statements that the human rights of women are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights. Essentially, this declaration is a frontal attack on patriarchy because it implies that existing laws which privilege men and maintain the subordination of women must be eradicated. This mantra was reiterated in the Platform of Action which was passed at 1995 World Conference for Women in Beijing despite a concerted effort of the Vatican and several Muslim nations to backtrack on this pivotal assertion that women's rights are human rights.

Gender and Development

Participants at a 1978 workshop on "The Continuing Subordination of Women in the Development Process" at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University underscored challenges to WID coming from Marxist feminists. Noting that the growing literature on development was largely descriptive, the participants found that this approach, by treating women as a distinct and isolated category, ignored gender relationships within the household and labor force. In this ground-breaking volume, the authors analyze "the persistent forms of gender inequality in the processes of development," (Young et al 1993: xix).

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[4] The term "feminization of poverty" as well as the indicators that are used to measure poverty are widely contested (see Chant 1997; Razawi 2000). Research suggests that women's capacity to command and allocate resources is more crucial to empowerment than simply receiving them (see Moser 1998; Chant 2006).

[5] See: www.landesa.org.

[6] For case studies, see: www.icrw.org.

An added dimension to this critique has come from transnational feminist scholars who echo the complaint that women are not a universal and homogeneous category as presupposed by Western feminist scholarship. Rather, as Mohanty argues, Third World women must be viewed through an anticolonial, anticapitalist lens. From this view, the subordination which characterizes these women must include, not only gender relations, but also the "hegemonic imperialism" that describes the present capitalistic system (Mohanty 2003: 20). But the DAWN network insists that any struggle against these forms of oppression must not compromise "the struggle against gender subordination," (Sen and Grown 1985).

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles of women and men and is distinct from biological sex. As such, gender describes what is accepted femininity and masculinity in a particular society. These characteristics are learned behavior and easily manipulated by government or religious leaders who seek to change women's roles. They change the gender division of labor but not the fact that women are responsible for most of the unpaid labor in the household.   As the development discourse recognized women's economic roles and as commodification required earned income, traditional methods of combining both work in the home and in the field have increasingly lengthened women's double day. In both developing and developed economies, women's caring work continues to be undervalued and is seldom included in economic data, further disadvantaging women. The new Caring Economy Campaign aims to values unpaid care work.[7]

Since gender of an individual is the kaleidoscope of all a person's characteristics, the question arises as to what should be considered the predominant attribute. The Marxist discourse had emphasizes class as the organizing principle. In the 1980s, social movements organized around ethnic or religious identity gained prominence. While most focus today is on Islamic societies, the break-up of Yugoslavia and the subsequent Balkan wars illustrate the power of cultural identity. Control of reproduction, and therefore of women, is central to identity politics because women are celebrated as the embodiment of culture and values.   Some women see this role an "an onerous burden, one they would just as soon not assume, especially if it is predicated upon control and conformity. But for other women, it is an honor and a privilege…This is why all 'fundamentalist' movements have women supporters as well as women opponents," (Moghadam 1994: 19).

Identity politics, by seeking an idealized past, reasserts customary patriarchal family law. Similarly, Robert Mugabe railed at a new constitution that would give women rights to land; he declared that he did not lead Zimbabwe to independence to undermine patriarchal privilege.   Such visions of the past are selective, applying primarily to gender relationships. Modern armaments are never embargoed, whether by Iran or the Taliban, but their version of the idealised past are retrogressive regarding women's rights.

During the 1980s, both scholars and practitioners began to utilize the term gender when discussing household relationships, especially when describing the sexual division of labor (Overholt et al 1985; Tinker 1982). This substitution has led to widespread use on data forms and now encourages transgender groups to request yet a new category for census gathering.

Gender, Mainstreaming, and Holding Agencies Responsible

Transforming this nuanced concept of gender into programmatic reality turned out to be much more problematical than expected when, [toward] during the 1990s, many development agencies

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[7] http://www.caringeconomy.org/

adopted the terminology.   Proponents declared that such programs are less likely to cause a backlash from men who often objected to donor's focus on women.   Acknowledging gender relations in planning, they believed, would result in more sustainable projects. They also hoped that a new approach would reinvigorate agencies to improve and increase projects for women. IDRC was perhaps the first development agency to adopt "gender" in its policy statements.

Not all practitioners were pleased with the change. They pointed out that when translated the term was problematical (Rounaq 1995). In Vietnam, some five words were used and all of them meant physical sex.   Others have suggested that men running development agencies were uncomfortable with the growing strength of the women's movement and wished to deflect its power. In practice, however, the term just became a euphemism for woman.[8]

Caroline Moser, who had run training workshops on gender and housing for women from developing counties at the University of London, published *Gender Planning and Development* while she was working at the World Bank. Noting that historically, bureaucratic efforts to introduce WID were often "symbolic," Moser comments on the hypocrisy of many donor agencies because they employed so few staff in relevant offices (Moser 1993: 126; 149). The book reviews institutional obstacles to the adopting of any new policy and asks whether the preferable strategy is to create a separate institution or to mainstream gender throughout the institution.

Many donor agencies, disappointed in the limited impact that WID/GAD offices were having on policies or programs, embraced gender mainstreaming as a method to insert the issue of gender throughout the organization.   In 2001 the World Bank synthesized global gender mainstreaming experiences in a landmark report, Engendering Development (World Bank 2001).   It correlated greater economic growth and poverty reduction with greater gender equality worldwide. This report provided the intellectual basis for the Bank's "Gender Equality as Smart Economics" campaign, featuring a unilateral instrumentalist approach to empowering women to attain economic growth, which neglected advancing women's and men's equal rights (Zuckerman 2007; Arend 2010). Case studies of UNDP, the World Bank, and ILO, indicate that "to a surprising degree" these multilateral agencies have incorporated mainstreaming into their practices, but in keeping with their organizational goals so that gender equity is only one of their policy objectives. The result is that adoption of gender mainstreaming by the United Nations "turned a radical movement idea into strategy of public administration," (Prugl and Lustgarten 2006: 55; 68-69).

A 2011 gender mainstreaming workshop organized by Oxfam GB and the UK Gender and Development Network, recorded some in the women's movement felt that "gender mainstreaming has become just part of the technocratic language … devoid of passion." However, participants from the global South hailed mainstreaming as a beacon beyond institutions that is a political statement favoring gender justice and women's rights (Cooke 2012).

Ultimately, feminists recognize that constant pressure is necessary to ensure that women's issues are not sidelined. Several donor agencies abolished their WID/GAD units when they switched to gender mainstreaming and lost a crucial advocate.

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[8] An illuminating discussion of the WID/GAD debate may be found in Jaquette and Staudt 2006.

Working inside the World Bank's central gender unit during 1998-2000, co-author Zuckerman was struck by how environmental concerns took off more deeply than did gender issues.[9] A key reason that environmental concerns received much more attention than did gender issues was the civil society role of the environmental campaign on the World Bank launched in the early 1980s. All Bank country offices have environmental experts. In contrast, although the Bank's gender unit is strategically housed in the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, it has under 20 professional staff members, supplemented by gender focal points in less than half of Bank country offices who spend a fraction of their time addressing gender issues (Zuckerman and Wu 2005; Gender Action 2012). The Bank's gender mainstreaming investments, at 0.13 percent of the total budget, are paltry (Gender Action 2012). Trust funds rather than core Bank funds support most of this spending. The Bank and other International Financial Institutions' (IFIs) gender expenditures far lag their environmental investments (Zuckerman and Wu 2005).

Inspired by the environmental campaign, Zuckerman created Gender Action in 2002 to lead civil society advocacy for gender justice in IFI investments.[10] Gender Action remains the only organization dedicated to holding IFI investments accountable for ending harmful gender impacts, promoting women's rights and positively benefitting poor men and women. Gender Action works in many civil society coalitions because of power in numbers, monitoring IFI investments and leading advocacy to prevent detrimental gender impacts of IFI climate change, extractive industry, gender-based violence, agriculture and food security, pre- and post-conflict, post-Tsunami and post-earthquake Haiti reconstruction, and HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights investments and policies. To scale up this work, in 2012 Gender Action launched the Global Gender IFI Watcher Network.[11]

Clearly, to affect institutional change, putting gender into all policies and programs must be accompanied by a well staffed and funded office that lobbies for funding and monitors programs for women.   Perhaps an analogy exists in the conceptualization of this volume. All authors were urged to include gender in their chapters, but after a year of planning the editors realized the need for a separate chapter on women, gender, and development.

Demanding political power through quotas

Political participation of women has become a major goal throughout the global women's movement. Frustrated at the slow pace of change and impatient with the resistance from governments and agencies to laws and regulations recognizing women's rights and capabilities the 1995 women's conference in Beijing Platform of Action demanded that 30% of all decision-making positions in government should be allocated to women.   Recognizing that appointed positions are more difficult to control, women focused on elected bodies, promoting the idea that 30 % of membership is necessary to provide a critical mass that would allow significant changes in policies and procedures. Today, over half the world's countries have some sort of electoral quota system for their legislatures.[12]

Research shows that quotas do not consistently result in increased numbers of women elected. More important, even in countries with significant women representatives, policy change is uneven

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[9] In 1981, when Zuckerman first joined the World Bank, the Bank had one WID and one environment advisor. Since then environmental ranks in the Bank grew to roughly 800 while gender experts hover around 100, mostly composed of part time country gender focal points (Zuckerman and Wu 2005).

[10] Zuckerman previously worked inside the Bank as a project economist, founder of the program to address structural adjustment's impacts on poor women and men, and in the gender unit.

[11] See www.genderaction.org.

[12] See: www.quotaproject.org

(Ballington and Karam 2005; Dahlerup 2006; Tinker 2004). The Human Development Report writes that "Quotas are primarily a temporary remedial measure, and are no substitute for raising awareness, increasing political education, mobilizing citizens and removing procedural obstacle to women getting nominated and elected," (HDR 2002:70).

Much debate centers on the rationale for more women legislators. If the goal is equality, then increased numbers constitutes success. But if the goal is to empower women to implement a more feminist agenda, then outcomes, not numbers is crucial. Thus how women candidates are selected and who supports them must be analyzed before numbers of women in legislatures can be equated with empowerment.

The most efficacious method for ensuring that women are elected to legislatures is through the party list system utilized by some 35% of countries. Parties determine who is on the list: in the closed list system, if every other candidate were a woman, the party would have elected 50% female legislators. In contrast, over half of the world's states use an electoral system based on a territorially defined constituency. (IDEA 2002:2) Requiring a specific single member constituency in national elections to be reserved for a woman is politically impractical, so women winning these races have a stronger voice in their parties than women put on the list by male party leaders.[13]

Clearly, the numbers of women in a legislature does not necessarily correlate with women's empowerment.   A history of women's attempts to pass laws against violence against women in Sweden and India illustrate this critical point. In Sweden, as a result of both major political parties deciding in 1972 to alternate women and men on their list of candidates, Sweden has had the highest percentage of women legislators until Rwanda surpassed them in 2008.   Feminists argue that this action moved debate on women's issues into the parties and made a unified voice for women outside parties more difficult. They complain that most social policy legislation such as improved working conditions and pay, affordable child care, and paid maternity – and paternity – leave, drew on a socialist ideology and were passed with little input from independent feminist organizations (Gustafsson et al 1997). Further, legislation passed in 2003 meant to protect women from domestic violence has not been aggressively implemented due to outdated attitudes; incidences of violence are increasing, according to a 2004 report by Amnesty International (2004). In 2005 a women's party, The Feminist Initiative, was formed to agitate for reform of rape laws, programs to address domestic violence (Wanhnerud 2005).

India has had active women's organizations for years, but most focused on charitable work or development projects.   For ten years, these groups agitated for a law dealing with violence against women. Finally, in 2005, women organized a national lobby, WomenPowerConnect, with full-time lobbyists in New Delhi. This coalition of women's organizations was instrumental in the passage of the Domestic Violence Bill finally became law in November 2006 (Tinker 2008).[14]

The Human Development Reports, when calculating the Gender Inequality Index, measures empowerment as the number of women in parliaments plus women's educational attainment. A more accurate method of indicating empowerment would be to consider the impact of legislation passed by elective bodies, and also the numbers of politically active women's organizations.   Similarly, to achieve greater equity in realizing the other two indicators in the Gender Inequality Index--reproductive health and employment, laws and customs that preserve male privilege must be changed. Until women can control their own body, they will be unable to realize their reproductive rights. Also, women's

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[13] For a detailed review of electoral systems and women see: Tinker 2004
[14] See: www.womenpowerconnect.org

capabilities will not be achievable until women can own their homes and until the care economy is included in economic calculations.

Conclusion

The story of women and international development is a story of women organizing to challenge the development paradigm. Over fifty years, women have influenced development agencies to include women's concerns, and formed a global social movement that has altered gender relations throughout the world.   Today women are seeking political power to advance their claims for equity. To envisage the years to come, an historical perspective refreshingly underlines that tremendous progress has been attained for women's rights and gender justice (although massive work remains to achieve full women's empowerment). In developed countries a century ago, women could not vote and rarely worked beyond the home. Now they do both although globally gender gaps persist in earnings, household responsibilities, asset ownership and decision making. Going forward, countries most resistant to women filling citizen and economic roles will certainly continue to experience an erosion of traditional cultural and religious barriers to women's empowerment in response to citizens' bottom up organizing and government reforms.

While challenges to close gender gaps worldwide remain immense, there is unprecedented energy today toward realizing women's and men's equal rights. The global women's movement has exploded into a myriad of new organizations and networks led by women in every country. Such organizations also empower women as political, community, and social leaders. As these leaders influence development policies and initiate national legislation, world society and gender relationships will surely become more equitable.

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