

WID *Information*

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FOURTH UN WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

**REPORT OF THE
*United Nations Conference on Women
Beijing, China, September 15- August 15, 1995*
By Kathleen Cloud
University of Illinois**

If the Non-Governmental Forum was a demonstration of the diversity, energy and commitment of the international women's movement at the end of the twentieth century, the official United Nations Women's Conference was evidence that it is also a sophisticated movement. Huarou was a wonderful melange of tents, mud, heat, dialogue, demonstrations, and celebration. Every one who came could have their say in a multitude of simultaneous workshops. By contrast, the government conference was a highly structured process of dialogue, deliberation, politics, and compromise designed to produce a Platform of Action acceptable to the 180+ countries present. The wonder of it is that in spite of pre-conference worry about backlash, there is general agreement that the conference not only confirmed agreements from earlier Conferences, but gained additional ground in a number of important areas.

The process of Platform approval was highly formalized. Non-governmental groups could lobby, but only government delegations could speak, and decide. Preparatory meetings over the past two years had produced a Draft Platform of 362 numbered paragraphs which listed actions to address these priorities:

- The elimination of poverty for both women and men.
- equal access to education at all levels.
- equal access to health care, including reproductive health care.
- equal access to productive resources including employment, land, capital, information and technology.
- women's full participation in decision making at all levels in the public and private sectors.
- women's full adult legal status, including the ability to own property, sign contracts, receive credit, and travel without male co-signers.
- ending of violence against women.

- acknowledgement of women's rights as human rights.
- full participation of women in conflict resolution and the peace making process.
- the girl child.

As the Conference began, about 20% of the text was in brackets, indicating that some countries had problems with that language.

While the Main Committee was listening to seven-minute speeches from each participating country, the real work of the Conference went on in two Working Groups. The Platform text was divided between them, and they worked their way through it, a paragraph at a time. Every country had a right to sit in both groups and voice their positions. Text was available in the five UN languages, and headphones provided simultaneous translation of the discussion.

If there were no problems, the paragraph was formally accepted. If there were additions, questions or objections, an attempt was made to achieve consensus there and then. If consensus was not easily achievable, countries with diverging views were asked to develop language acceptable to them all, and to return with it. In the meantime, the language was bracketed, to indicate that it was still under discussion. For a small number of the most difficult issues such as reproduction, an on-going contact group was designated to work out acceptable language that could be used throughout the document.

Most of the Draft Platform moved through the process smoothly. Sections on education, access to credit and employment, peace, women's leadership, violence, and much of the health section went through with some fine-tuning but no serious problems. Most NGO's were satisfied that their concerns were adequately addressed. In the interests of clarity, strong positive statements on the value of the family and the importance of religion in the lives of many women were included, as was a statement on the destructive potential of fundamentalism.

Other issues, primarily dealing with sexuality, took a little more doing. The compromise which had been worked out at Cairo on reproductive health issues held, and after some discussion, was slightly strengthened by the contact group. The issue of female circumcision was addressed by citing language from earlier conferences on the "right to bodily integrity", and circumcision as a violation of this right of girl children. Language condemning discrimination based on "sexual orientation" did not make it into the final document, but it received more serious and sympathetic attention than many had expected.

The phrase "sexual rights" provoked a series of discussions that in some ways characterized the tone of the entire conference. The phrase comes out of recent human rights documents, and definition of the right has proved elusive. As might be expected, a substantial number of countries had trouble with the phrase, but most were willing to agree that there is a real issue; force or coercion in sexual matters does violate human rights, and lack of knowledge or means can also limit the exercise of rights. Everyone eventually agreed:

"that couples have the right to freely and responsibly control their fertility, and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes the right to make decisions free of discrimination, coercion and violence" Para 223.

The sticking point was whether this right belonged only to married couples, or also to individuals. Sex outside marriage was one issue; another was sexual rights within marriage. Countries were lining up predictably when the African women made a strong plea for the rights of the individual, even within marriage. In Africa, the high levels of heterosexual transmission of AIDs mean that for women, the right to refuse a partner who is not using a condom is a matter of life and death. In the face of this heartbreaking reality, the agreed text now reads, "the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely."

A number of countries who are uncomfortable accepting rights to sex outside marriage then submitted interpretative statements saying that they understood the text to apply only within marriage. Such statements, as well as reservations on particular paragraphs, provided a mechanism for achieving consensus, and still permitting some difference of opinion.

This conference was characterized by low levels of confrontation, and more genuine search for agreement. We are not all exactly alike, however, and we do not, and will not, agree on everything. The issue came up repeatedly during the conference: How far does the universality of rights extend, and where does culture have a legitimate claim to difference? It is clear that culture can no longer be used as an excuse for blatant oppression; universality has gained substantial ground in the last decade. Yet there is value in our diversity. Finding ways to honor both universality and diversity remains a major task not only for women, but for all of society.

International Women's Day 1996

The planning meeting for the 1996 International Women's Day celebrations has been scheduled for December 7, 1995, 5:45 p.m. at the 8th Day Center for Justice, Chicago. Some ideas for March 8 and/or 9, 1996 - Plan both a street event -- rally, march and an inside event -- teach-in. Possible themes: Women's rights are human rights; Economic justice; Women speaking in solidarity. Connect the theme to the Beijing conference. If you plan to attend the meeting, call 312-641-5151 (Katheleen, Delores or Carol).

WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES AT UIUC

WID Executive Committee Members

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RESEARCH, STUDY & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

RESEARCH RESULTS

PERCEPTIONS OF SMALLHOLDER FARMERS OF EXTENSION OFFICERS BY GENDER IN TANZANIA

Jean M. Due and Flavianus Magayane*

For decades agricultural extension has been an important tool in educating farmers on better farming methods. Extension bridges the gap between technical knowledge and farmers' practices and has been shown to be cost-effective (Birkhaeuser, Evenson, and Feder, 1991). In the past agricultural extension officers in Sub-Saharan Africa have been male, relating primarily to male farmers. But in Africa, where women contribute more than half the agricultural labor, choose the seeds, and are increasingly making decisions on agricultural production, it has been argued, especially during the last fifteen years, that women should be hired as extension agents. Custom often precluded male agents from disseminating information to females and husbands did not bring information home to their wives (Spring, 1988, Due, Mollie et al., 1987, Chenoweth, 1987, Saito and Weideman, 1990, Due, Sikaponde et al., 1991, to mention only a few). Since 1985 some female extension agents have been hired in Africa but little research has been undertaken to ascertain smallholder farmers' perceptions of female agents. This study is the first (in our knowledge) to ascertain farmers' attitudes to each gender of officer.

In Tanzania's Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development one-third of its village extension officers (VEOs) are now female; men and women receive the same training. In October, 1995, Due and Magayane conducted a study to ascertain smallholder farmers' attitudes of VEOs by gender. The study was conducted in Morogoro region where 240 male and female smallholder farmers were interviewed. Sets of villages in close proximity and with similar soils and crops were chosen, one of which had a male and the other a female VEO. Each of the VEOs had the same training and approximately the same years of experience. Farmers were asked if they preferred a male or female extension officer and their reasons for their preferences.

Although the results have not been fully analyzed, Due and Magayane found that of the 118 male farmers who had VEOs 35% preferred a male, 30% preferred a female, and 35% were neutral in their choices. Of the 114 female farmers who had VEOs 40% preferred a female, 26% preferred a male, and 34% were neutral. Of the total sample reporting, 31% preferred males, 35% preferred females, and 34% were neutral. These preferences for, or neutrality toward, female VEOs are surprising in a predominantly Moslem area! The farmers often stated that what was important was an extension agent who had information to assist them and not the gender of the agent. A district extension officer stated, "Character is more important than gender in assisting farmers."

When farmers were asked the reasons for their preferences, 22% of the men indicated their choice between male or female VEOs was because they very welcoming and responsive, 34% because they gave good advice regarding crops and agriculture, 21% reported there was no cultural bias (female agents visiting males, etc.) and 12% stated that the VEOs had the same training and, therefore, they had no preference by gender. These responses reflect characteristics male farmers desired in their extension officers.

The women farmers gave similar reasons for their choices but percentages varied; 14% found VEOs they preferred welcoming and responsive, 38% gave good advice on crops and agriculture, 24% reported no cultural bias, and 24% were neutral as the VEOs had the same training. Women farmers often reported that they preferred a female agent as they could share experiences more easily with her. (These choices will be analyzed for significance by gender later.) Women farmers also chose different meeting times than men.

Although the extension officers receive the same training, the sampled farmers who responded thought female extension officers presented better information than males (34% to 29% with 37% neutral), came better prepared (34 to 29%), and presented more useful information, especially on crops and livestock, credit and nutrition (39 to 25%).

What policy recommendations flow from this research? (1) Ministries of Agriculture should employ more female extension agents as they no longer need to fear farmer opposition to females. Farmers know the value of extension; they want agents who will get out of their offices and provide information that will assist them. (2) With the many demands on farm women's time, extension officers should ask the women the best times for meetings; the district extension officer said that women prefer different meeting times than men. (3) Many women prefer to meet in women's groups as they are freer to share their feelings than in mixed groups; they also find that many other women have the same problems.

Further results will be reported later when data are more fully analyzed. Data gathered reflect both farmers' and VEOs' attitudes.

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RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The Institute for Research on Women at Rutgers announces the Visiting Scholar Program. The visiting scholar program provides an opportunity for postdoctoral scholars to take advantage of Rutgers' unique resources in the study of women and gender. Visiting scholar programs carry faculty privileges including access to libraries and recreational facilities, private office space, participation in university lectures, colloquia and seminars. Scholars receive e-mail accounts, xeroxing and telephone privileges. Each scholar will be invited to give a public presentation and asked to participate in the Institute's fortnightly seminar, "Towards 2000". **Deadline for Fall 1996: January 16, 1996; the deadline for Spring 1997 is April 1996.** For more information contact the Institute for Research on Women, Douglas Campus, 27 Clifton Ave., P.O. Box 270, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903-0270. Tel. (908) 932-9072/9073. Fax: (908)932-0861.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The Royal Tropical Institute announces: A Training Workshop for Trainers in Women, Gender and Development June 9-22, 1996. The course aims to support both women and men currently or about to be involved in the development and implementation of training programs. Workshop objectives are: to increase participants' ability to plan, design and deliver training in various aspects of women, gender and development; to enhance participants' knowledge and insights in experiential learning and participatory training methods; to strengthen participants skills in using different training strategies, approaches and techniques; to increase general and conceptual knowledge of women and gender; and to share relevant experiences and materials among participants from different countries and regions. For more information contact: The Secretary, Women & Development Training, Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Mauritskade 63, 1092 AD Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel. 31(20)5688 306. Fax: 31(20)5688 434/5688 409.

CONFERENCES AND CALL FOR PAPERS

● The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill announces a collaborative Forum on "Women, Community, and Sustainable Development: Collaborative Approaches to Skills, Theory, and Practice" to be held at the University of North Carolina, May 16-18, 1996. Goals of the forum include to:

1. Provide a meeting place for activists, academics, theorists, and practitioners from developing and developed regions to share with and instruct each other in sustainable development perspectives.
2. Identify and assess those skills women need to contribute more effectively to sustainable development efforts.
3. Establish principles and definitions that will guide future annual training institutes for grassroots women. Participants will include grassroots leaders, activists, academics, researchers, funders, and non-government organization directors from Southeastern United States, Asia, Africa and Latin America. For more information contact Paul Price, University Center for International Studies, CB # 5145, Chapel Hill, NC 27599, USA. Tel. (919) 962-3094. OR Dorothy Gamble, School of Social Work, CB # 3550, Chapel Hill, NC 27599, USA. Tel. (919) 962-1225. Fax: (919) 962-0890.

● The Women Studies Program and The Division of Professional and Continuing Education announces the 9th Annual International Conference on "Women in Higher Education" from January 4-7, 1996 at Camino Real Paso del Notre Hotel, El Paso, Texas. The conference will provide faculty, professional staff, administrators and students with an opportunity to share research and ideas relevant to women in post-secondary institutions of all types. Participants of the previous conferences have included Australians, Canadians, Greek, Mexicans, Argentineans, Turkish and Bahrainians. Conference benefits include: opportunity to compare and discuss situations of women in higher education; supportive and open-minded environment; networking and learning of important research to women; specialized content; chance to meet others with similar concerns; exchanging thoughts internationally; keeping up with the people in the field; breaks isolation; high quality presentations; factual, data-driven reports; a legitimate avenue to voice legitimate concerns across disciplines. For more information contact: Conference Services, Division of Professional and Continuing Education, The University of Texas at El Paso, 500 W. University, El Paso, Texas 79968-0602. Fax: (915) 747-5538.

FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS AND AWARDS

Frederick Douglas Institute for African and African-American Studies announces postdoctoral fellowships (\$24,000); pre-doctoral dissertation fellowships (\$10,000) and four-year fellowships for graduate studies, with tuition plus academic year stipends ranging from \$6,000 to \$8,000. For more information contact: Associate Director for Research and Curriculum, Frederick Douglas Institute for African and African-American Studies, University of Rochester, 302 Morey Hall, Rochester, NY 14627. Deadline January 31, 1996.

Institute of International Education (IIE) Professional Development Program offers fellowships for American researchers in the fields of business and economics, law, journalism, public administration and international relations an opportunity to develop a specialized knowledge of East Central Europe, the Baltic States and the NIS. Grants are available for 3 to 7 months and include round-trip international airfare, a monthly stipend, insurance and allowances. Eligibility: US Citizenship. For more information contact: US Student Program Division, Institute of International Education, 809 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017-3580. Deadline: February 2, 1996.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Tulane University Center for Intentional Health & Development announces three positions available in Niger, West Africa:

1. IEC Specialist for Population, and Maternal and Child Health.
2. Health Care Financing specialist.
3. Rural integrated services development specialist.

The project is funded by USAID. Interested candidates must be willing to work in Niamey, Niger for a period of two years beginning in early 1996. Eligibility: Fluent French, previous African Experience (more than 5 years) master degrees or equivalent in a relevant public health discipline. For more information contact: Dr. Nancy Mock, P.O. Box 13, 1440 Canal St., Suite 2200, New Orleans, LA 70112. Tel. 504-587-7318; Fax. 504 584-3653. e-mail: tcihid@mailhost.tcs.tulane.edu

ANNOUNCEMENTS/RESOURCES/PUBLICATIONS

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

- **Gender training and sensitization in Zambia: Chiefs rise to the defense of women's rights.**

As custodians of tradition, chiefs have been known to allocate land for agriculture only to male-led families, and to condone practices such as the expropriation of widows by their late husbands' relatives. Now seven traditional rulers in the northern province of Luapula have launched a campaign to end discrimination against women.

The project stemmed from a workshop for chiefs, headmen and community court judges, organized by an Irish aid agency. The chiefs have undertaken to educate their subjects on issues like gender balance and equality, literacy, the rights of the girl-child, access to credit, property grabbing, gender violence and feminization of poverty. The project will be extended to other provinces until all traditional rulers are involved.

Source: Inter Press Third World News Agency (IPS), November 3, 1995.

- **Women, Law and Development International - WLD** (formerly Institute for Women, Law and Development) is a non-governmental organization committed to the defense and promotion of women's human rights globally. WLD International links women's organizations, research institutions, human rights and development organizations in order to: advance understanding and build global consensus about the gender dimensions of rights; clarify the role of law and its potential use as a tool for women's empowerment; articulate and consolidate international strategies in defense of women's rights; promote favorable United Nations and governmental policies affecting women's rights; and expand and strengthen the women's rights network to make it a truly international force. For more information contact: WLD International, 1350 Connecticut Ave. , N.W. Suite 407, Washington, D.C. 20036-1701 USA. Tel (202)463-7477. Fax: (202) 463-7480. e-mail: iwld@access.digex.net

RESOURCES/PUBLICATIONS

- *The Psychology of Gender*, (1993), edited. by Anne E. Bell and Robert J. Sternberg. The book investigates the psychology of gender from a variety of theoretical perspectives ranging from evolutionary to the social constructionist. The book illuminates the social and scholarly debates that have profound implications for the way men and women perceive themselves, and how these perceptions affect their relationships at work, with their children and with each other. Topics include: What is the relation of gender to biology and environment?: An evolutionary model of how what you answer depends on just what you ask; Self-fulfilling prophecies: A social psychological view of gender; Gender in thought, belief, and action: A cognitive approach; The social learning of gender; A social constructionist view of gender; The evolutionary perspective; Aspects of early gender development: A psychodynamic perspective; A cross-cultural viewpoint; The psychology of gender: A perspective on perspectives. For orders contact: Guilford Publications, Inc., Dept T, 72 Spring Street, New York, NY 10012 USA. Tel. 1-800-365-7006; 212-431-9800. Fax: 212-966-6708. e-mail: info@guilford.comm

- *HIV & AIDS: The Global Inter-Connection* (1995). Edited by Elizabeth Reid, Director HIV and Development Program UNDP. The book presents the stories of people from around the world. The compelling stories are essential reading for anyone concerned about the future of the HIV epidemic and individuals and communities living with and working to stop the spread of the virus. Stories from: Brazil, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, the Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand, Trinidad, Uganda, the United States, Zaire, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. For orders contact: Kumarian Press INC., 14 Oakwood Ave, West Hartford, CT 06119-2127 USA. Tel. 1-800-289-2664 (within the USA); 860-233-5895. Fax: 860-233-6072.

- *Women at the Center: Developmental Issues and Practices for the 1990s* (1993) edited by Gay Young, Vidyamali Samarasinghe, Ken Kusterer, from American University. The book gives a complete overview of the vital, diverse and central roles that women play in solving problems worldwide. Based on the experiences of practitioners, grassroots, activists, academics from both the North and South - this book dives into a number of today's burning global issues. For orders contact: Kumarian Press INC., 14 Oakwood Ave, West Hartford, CT 06119-2127 USA. Tel. 1-800-289-2664 (within the USA); 860-233-5895. Fax: 860-233-6072.

- *Gender Analysis in Development Planning: A Case Book* (Cases; Teaching Notes) edited Aruno Rao, Mary B. Anderson, and Catherine Overholt. The book provides useful learning tools on how to incorporate gender variables into development project. The cases are open-ended, allowing you to exercise problem-solving skills and to reach your own practical solutions. Helps you find alternative management strategies and planning and evaluation techniques sensitive to gender issues. Topics include: Gender Analysis Framework; Bangladesh: Chandpur Irrigation; India: Access to Schooling in Ambakach/Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme; Indonesia: P2WIK-UNDP Batik Project; Philippines: Aslong Irrigation; and Thailand: Saraburi Dairy Farming. For orders contact: Kumarian Press INC., 14 Oakwood Ave, West Hartford, CT 06119-2127 USA. Tel. 1-800-289-2664 (within the USA); 860-233-5895. Fax: 860-233-6072.

- *Women and Social Policies in Europe: Work, Family and the State*, 1993. Edited by Jane Lewis - All Souls College, Oxford, UK. It is a thoroughly documented book presenting an overview of social policies in Germany, Italy, Denmark, Britain, Ireland, Norway, France and Sweden. The central theme is paid and unpaid work. Topics include: The Introduction: Women, work, family and social policies in Europe; The gendered Scandinavian welfare states: The interplay between women's roles as mothers, workers and citizens in Denmark; The women-friendly welfare states: The case of Norway and Sweden; Managing the mothers: The

case of Ireland; Slow motion: Women, work and the family in Germany; Women, work and welfare in France; Gender, "Gift relationship" and welfare state cultures in France; Women and the state: Changes in roles and rights in France, West Germany, Italy and Britain 1970-90; and Women's rights in the European Community. For more information contact: The Publicity and Marketing Department, Edward Elgar Publishing, Distributed by Ashgate Publishing Co., Old Post Road, Brookfield, VT 05036-9704. Tel (802)276-3162. Fax: (802) 276-3651. e-mail:AshgaePub@aol.com

• *The Economic Status of Women under Capitalism: Institutional Economics and the Feminist Theory*, edited by Janice Peterson - State University of New York, Fredonia, and Doug Brown - Northern Arizona University. The book shows how economics can be used to analyze the economic oppression of women and promote progressive social and economic change. The contributors to the book share a common concern that the dominant approaches to economic analysis are limited in their ability to analyze the subordination of women and prescribe policy responses. For more information contact: The Publicity and Marketing Department, Edward Elgar Publishing, Distributed by Ashgate Publishing Co., Old Post Road, Brookfield, VT 05036-9704. Tel (802)276-3162. Fax: (802) 276-3651. e-mail:AshgaePub@aol.com

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