
Conference Resolution, Recommendations and Research Guidelines



Participants in Conference 133

CONFERENCE RESOLUTION

The Conference was requested to show its solidarity with a woman who has been punished for her political convictions by long-term imprisonment. Unanimous support was given to the request and a telegram was therefore sent to President Carter of the United States demanding her release. The text was as follows:

To: The President of the United States of America. The Subordination of Women Project, organisers of the Conference on the Subordination of Women in the Development Process, recently held at the Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, England, joins the United Nations Decolonization Committee's Resolution of September 12, 1978, in urging the United States Government to arrange the immediate and unconditional release of LOLITA LEBRON, the Puerto Rican nationalist who has been imprisoned longer than any other woman political prisoner in the Western Hemisphere.

Dr. Kate Young, Co-ordinator of Conference 133
23 September, 1978.'

CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESEARCH GUIDELINES

The Conference felt it was not possible to make any recommendations as to areas in which

research is urgently needed without first placing such research in context. Thus two overall recommendations concerning the nature of development and how it is conceptualised, and on the nature of research and how it is carried out were made first, followed by a number of recommendations on research into the situation of women. These fell into two categories: those concerned with the situation of women researchers in the Third World, and those dealing with aspects of collaboration between researchers and the people researched. A number of suggestions were also made about the Agencies and about local policy-makers and government officials interested in the subject of women. Lastly, suggestions were put forward about research priorities both in terms of research needed to improve or test theoretical concepts and frameworks, and that needed to collect empirical data. Given space constraint, it is not possible to list here the very large number of suggestions made, and only general areas are indicated.

I. APPROACH TO POLICY MAKING AND RESEARCH

1. Conference participants stressed the need for a *broader definition of development*. All too often development is considered in a narrowly economic way, frequently in terms of the adoption of the latest form of Western technology. It is

imperative that the concept include linking the notion of economic betterment to the promotion of new forms of non-hierarchical human relationships, and the rooting out of the structures which maintain and reinforce class domination and gender asymmetry.

As a logical concomitant of this view, so-called development which throws the balance of power within the family or within society further toward males, either as a gender category or as bearers of specific social relations, and which reaffirms the powerlessness of women and renders them ever more invisible and socially mute, must be condemned as much as those which perpetuate unequal class relations. *For far from leading to development, this leads to the further distortion of human relationships and the underdevelopment of human capacities.*

The Conference stressed that when assessing different forms of development, *only those social, economic or political changes which tend to eliminate male violence against women* in its multitudinous forms, whether within marriage or the family or outside such relations, *can be considered adequate.*

2. Participants stressed that *research must form part of the development process itself*, that is the process of developing the capacity for self-determination. Thus all forms of investigation which reinforce repressive structures must be condemned; in particular the justification of all forms of unequal relations between social categories (class, caste, ethnic groups), and of the silencing of women's voices and making invisible the part women play within society.

Participants drew especial attention to the repressive and class nature of the appropriation of knowledge which is the hallmark of much Western academic research. Failure to give due credit to informants even when this is politically possible, and to Third World colleagues with whom the First World researcher has worked, is all too common, as is the tendency to disseminate research results only within narrow academic and policy-making circles.

II. RESEARCH ON 'WOMEN: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Given that many women, whether researchers, government employees, or grass-roots organisers, work in isolation or even in situations where

colleagues show considerable hostility, the importance of support and feedback was stressed. *The Conference recommended the setting-up of an information network between the participants.* Initially this could be on an informal basis but eventually some more formal method should be sought. The Conference Coordinator was asked to look into ways of achieving this.

2. Where women's groups have already been set up, particularly those involved in research such as the African Association of Women on Research and Development (AAWORD), it was suggested that researchers should contact them in the initial planning stages in order to become aware of the issues to which the local women give priority as well as to discuss the researcher's theoretical concerns. The same recommendation applies to researchers working with unionised women. *The Conference recommended much closer contact between researchers and local women's groups, women's research groups, and trade unions.*

3. It was recommended that *more active attempts should be made to undertake joint research or comparative research* linking several research groups—i.e. that several women researchers should undertake (jointly or severally) research on a specific topic in different countries for comparative purposes.

4. Given the complex inter-connections between the various spheres of social life (economic, political, ideological, sexual) and their interdependence in shaping women's roles, the Conference *recommended that much greater effort should be made to encourage interdisciplinary approaches.* This could either be through interdisciplinary research groups or through regular convening of small discussion groups to analyse one particular aspect of social and economic development and its effects on women's lives.

5. *The Conference recommended that all research project budgets include a sum of money for translating the final report* into the main language of the area in which the research project was carried out, and that no project be supported by institutions such as IDS without this translation cost included.

6a. So as to ensure that research becomes an instrument of self-awareness and self-determination, researchers should assume responsibility for ensuring that the main findings of their research are written up in the most accessible form for local people who may not be versed in academic

traditions and language. *The Conference recommended that budgetary provision be made in all research proposals for research findings to be written up in an accessible manner.* This could involve joint collaboration between the researcher and the local group s/he has been working with.

6b. Serious thought should be given to returning material from research projects in the form of education materials. *Researchers should discuss the usefulness of films, film strips, photographs, cassette recordings with local workers during the research period.*

6c. *Wherever possible research findings should be discussed with the people from whom the information was collected* particularly if they belong to social groups normally denied access to knowledge permitting them a greater understanding of their own situation. *Their criticisms and dissensions should be recorded in the final report.*

III. THE AGENCIES

1. First World women should keep a watching brief on the funding agencies and prepare analyses of their policies in terms of their implications for Third World women. Where possible, such work should also include an analysis of where within the bureaucratic system projects which are considered to be of particular benefit to women, as against families, become blocked.

2. Special studies and policy documents should be reviewed and their authors given detailed and critical comments. It was suggested that FAO's work on rural women should be reviewed given their 1979 Conference on agrarian reform. The policy documents prepared by UNICEF, WHO and other agencies for the Year of the Child should also be critically assessed. A re-assessment of the implications of ILO and World Bank recommendations for the informal sector should be made. All such assessments should be communicated to Third World people working with women who may not have access to this information.

3. Women in national ministries and international agencies who are ready to support progressive arguments on women's issues should be identified. They should be sent analyses of official policies and projects and comments on the latest thinking on development strategies.

4. All the women's programmes within one country should be evaluated in order to see the ways

in which the various funding bodies, agencies, and the national government itself are promoting women's incorporation into national development. The results of such research should be fed back to First World women, and to women identified in ministries and agencies for their comments.

5. Feminists in the Third World should be helped to make their struggles visible, and strong efforts made to combat the commonly held view that women in the Third World are content with their present situation and find subordination neither limiting nor irksome. Funding bodies should be urged to provide funds for Third World women to study First World women's problems, and in particular political issues of feminism in the advanced capitalist countries.

6. Many of the recommendations have financial implications and funding bodies were urged to give them serious consideration.

IV. RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Overall processes, patterns of investment and women's employment

1. The relations between global patterns of accumulation, competition between capitals, and patterns and conditions of female employment.

What are the global patterns of accumulation within those sectors in which female employment is high: with increasing competition what is happening in these sectors in (a) developing countries (DCs) and (b) less developed countries (LDCs).

What changes are taking place in forms of female employment (i.e. increasing casualisation/part-time work) and in conditions of employment; are women being relegated to sectors which cheapen the cost of labour?

2. The relation between the capital accumulation process and the size and importance of various differing forms of maintenance of the labour force: i.e. the subsistence sector, the so-called informal sector, domestic labour, multiple wage-earning households.

3. The relation between phases of capital accumulation and the direction of investment, particularly in technology. What is the composition of the labour force and the sexual division of labour in the sectors of most advanced technology? Are specific forms of production required? What is the effect of reorganisation of labour processes

brought about by technological innovation on women of different classes?

4. The relationships between areas in which investment is of low priority (i.e. domestic sector) and the general accumulation process.

How are priorities fixed; what is the role of the agencies as against national governments or other agents; what is the role of local pressure groups?

What are the important factors in influencing large scale private investment in developing domestic technology, or social investment in socialising domestic work?

Women as rural producers

1. Specification of gender hierarchies in relation to form of land ownership, the technical and social division of labour, the productive capacity of the household enterprise.

2. The relationships between gender hierarchies and the supply of labour to capital.

3. The different effects of large-scale projects employing wage labour and small scale projects based on non-waged labour on women's productive role in agriculture, their position within the household, their fertility patterns, their ability to provide for their families.

4. Comparative analysis of various types of cooperatives (women only, mixed, class based, multifunction or single purpose, credit, consumer, producer, etc.) so as to pinpoint their positive and negative aspects in relation to women's control over productive and social investment.

Women as waged workers

1. The impact of the dynamic process of worldwide accumulation on the creation of women's employment in the Third World.

2. The processes of wage determination in general and women's wages in particular, and within certain sectors; the inter-relation between the general level of wages and forms of the family and of household composition.

3. The conditions of women's employment either in industry or capitalised agriculture. In particular stability of employment (in general and for women), relative wage levels, provision of training, sexual division of labour, occupational and health hazards.

4. The role of the State in promoting creation of employment: through legislation concerning conditions of employment, through provision of social services, through provision of special training. Differences of such intervention in private (national or foreign owned) or public sectors.

5. Impact of access to waged work on women; in the degrees of their control over income; on new patterns of consumption; on forms of consciousness (both as workers and as women).

Women as unwaged workers

1. Comparative analysis of domestic labour in both the DCs and LDCs to establish the different forms it takes and to develop adequate conceptual tools to understand and analyse differences; the relation between these different forms and the process of capital accumulation; the mechanisms of surplus extraction represented by the different forms.

2. Comparative analysis of the forms of women's income earning strategies in LDCs: relationship between these forms of self-employment or part-time employment and government policies encouraging industrialisation or capitalised agriculture.

Family and household

1. Power relations within the household as expressed in differential control over and distribution of resources; different consumption patterns of men and women with family unit; comparative analysis of forms of distribution within the household and particularly disposition of unmarried women's wages.

2. The relation of processes of capital accumulation to differing forms of family and of household composition (whether in socialist or capitalist societies) and differing mechanisms of social reproduction.

3. Analysis of tendency to matrifocality and the conditions giving rise to this in both urban and rural areas. Analysis of tendency to female headed households, and its relation to stage in the family cycle, to differential obligations of men and women toward maintenance of their children, to state regulations as regards the family.

4. Role of the State in both capitalist and socialist societies in influencing women's incorporation into the wage labour force through social provisions or maintaining women as domestic

chattels; comparative study of how various socialist countries have socialised certain aspects of domestic work, in particular whether such provision has been made at the point of production or of residence; effects on this on gender relations with the household and in society in general.

Birth control

1. Effects on different forms of wage employment on women's reproductive behaviour, including age of marriage, rates of nuptiality, form of sexual union, spacing of births, commitment to motherhood.
2. The economic determinants of fertility and their relation to the social relations of gender within the family and the household; the effect of social relations on gender within the wider society on women's capacity to conceive of roles in society which do not include motherhood.
3. Impact of intervention in women's reproductive capacities on (a) women's health (particularly effects of various forms of contraception including sterilisation); (b) the health of infants and the foetus; (c) women's ability to manage their generative capacities.
4. Comparative analysis of the ways in which birth control programmes are perceived and implemented by socialist and capitalist governments and the implications of this as to women's own control of their fertility.
5. Collecting data on indigenous methods of birth control; comparative analysis of social beliefs as to spacing of children, desirable age for motherhood, female sexuality, the nature of correct

marital relations, and women's right to control their own fertility.

Forms and organisation of control

1. The role of sexual violence or threat of violence in limiting women's options particularly access to employment, and active participation in political and social processes and access to community resources.
2. The nature of marriage contracts and the relationship of such contracts to males right to appropriate women's labour and the products of that labour, and to control women's reproductive capacities.
3. Analysis of the main sources of ideologies as to women's nature and women's roles in society and how such ideologies adapt to changing economic conditions; the mechanisms by which such changes are brought about (changes in legislation, the educational system, religious beliefs?).
4. Development of conceptual tools to analyse the economic, ideological, power mechanisms which underpin such forms of dependence within family based households as those in which (a) the male is the breadwinner (b) the male is the head of a family enterprise (c) the woman is the breadwinner but the male the household head. The effect of such forms of dependence on women's consciousness.
5. Impediments to the formation or effectiveness of women's autonomous organisations (whether based on the work place or residence or the political structure); comparative analysis of spontaneous alternative forms of organisation or protest.

Books Received

- E. Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1979
- Lee Sheng-Yi, *Public Finance and Public Investment in Singapore*, The Institute of Banking and Finance, Singapore, 1978
- E. Wayne Nafziger, *Class, Caste, and Entrepreneurship*, The University Press of Hawaii, 1978
- Bastiaan A. den Tuinder, *Ivory Coast: The Challenge of Success*. Report by the World Bank, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978
- Louis M. Goreux, *Interdependence in Planning*, A World Bank Research Publication, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977

- Critica*, Nos. 1 and 2, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, Peru, 1976, and 1977
- Irving B. Kravis, Alan Heston, Robert Summers, *International Comparisons of Real Product and Purchasing Power*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978
- George B. Baldwin, *Papua New Guinea: Its Economic Situation and Prospects for Development*, Report by the World Bank, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978
- Prasanta S. Majumdar and Ila Majumdar, *Rural Migrants in an Urban Setting*, Hindustan Publishing Corporation, Delhi, India, 1978