

Gender and Development

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Does development affects everyone equally?

- **After the Second World War**, the United States started promoting development policies in order to enhance countries destroyed by the conflict, such as Japan and European countries, or underdeveloped countries (Third World). In an effort to engage these nations in the capitalism bloc against the Soviet Union.
- In that time, it was believe that policies to boost economy would affect equally men and women. This **Welfare approach** viewed women as wives and mothers, it was concerned with child health and reducing fertility. It believed that trickle down policies would increase the families' income, therefore benefiting the women. (Monsen,2010)

- In 1946 the United Nations created the Commission on the Status of Women. It should promote women's political, economic, civil, social and educational rights. In 1987 it was expanded to include advocacy for equality, development and peace.
- However, in the 1970's, the Ester Boserup's in her book *Women's Role in Economic Development* criticised such perspective, she demonstrated that the improvement of the husband's income would not necessary benefit the wife. Her groundbreaking work fostered the creation of women and development studies.

- In 1973 the **Percy Amendment** in the US ensured that women had to be specially included in all projects of the US Agency of Development.
- In 1975, it has held in Mexico City the first world conference on the status of women, to coincide with the International Year for Women. In the same year, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) declared **The United Nations Women's Decade (1976-1985)**. The focus was to promote the advancement of women. In this context new ideas and perspectives emerged, such as WID, GAD and WAD.

- **Women and Development (WID)** comprehended that women needed policies that promoted income for them, because economic development was the key for their integration to society, the focus was to improve women's productive work. (Monsen,2010)
- However, this anti-poverty approach failed because it did not take into account the double or triple journeys experienced by women. Who are usually held responsible for taking care of children (reproductive work) or of the elderly (community management).

- It also ignored regional aspects of women's actual and potential contribution. Despite the critics, this perspective sponsored the creation of Women's ministries or agencies that institutionalised WID's policies in governments and NGO (Non-profitable Organizations). MOMSEN, 2010.
- **Gender and Development (GAD)** studies started as a critic of British scholars to WID, they understood that development policies could reshape gender power relations. They disapproved the homogenization made by WID.
- Therefore they emphasised the importance of the influence of different aspects such as class, age, marital status, religion and ethnicity or race on development outcomes.

- In the beginning gender was used as synonym for women, later this meaning changed to a broader concept.
- They believe that women were agents of change. While some scholars, such as Molyneux (1985) and Moser (1993), supported that women should do actions to promote ‘practical’ gender interests, which would improve women’s lives within their existing roles (without changing the structure, for example, a women becoming a CEO). Others, such as Derbyshire (2002), endorsed that they should foster ‘strategic’ gender interests that would help to increase women’s ability to take on new roles and to empower them (changing the structure, for instance, legalizing abortion). (Monsen, 2010)

Definitions by Momsen (2010)

- **Gender** -the socially acquired notions of masculinity and femininity by which women and men are identified. It is a widely used and often misunderstood term. It is sometimes mistakenly conflated with sex or used to refer only to women.
- **Gender identities**- they are socially acquired, are flexible and not simple binary constructions. Today there is greater awareness of multiple sexualities and transgender individuals (...).

- **Gender relations**- the socially constructed form of relations between women and men has been interrogated in terms of the way development policies change the balance of power between women and men.
- **Gender roles** – “the household tasks and types of employment socially assigned to women and men. They are not fixed and globally consistent and indeed become more flexible with the changes brought about by economic development. Everywhere gender is crosscut by differences in class, race, ethnicity, religion and age (...) Feminists have often seen women as socially constituted as a homogeneous group on the basis of shared oppression”. (KINNAIRD; MOMSEN, 1993 *apud* MOMSEN, 2010, pgs. 2 and 3).

- **Women and Development (WAD)** was fostered by South feminists as a critique to White North women's view about gender equality. They argued that developing countries perspective's was not taken into account, they stated that overcoming the effects of poverty and colonialism was more important than equality. MOMSEN,2010.
- In **1979**, the UNGA created the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination (CEDAW).

- The **Efficiency Approach** was embedded in the context of Washington Consensus neoliberal reforms. It understood that structural adjustment programs (SAP's) were necessary to promote development. It recognized that comprehending the roles and responsibilities of men and women was an important factor on planning development interventions. It was more focused on what women could do for development than the other way around. (Hickle, 2014)
- In 1985, there was the Nairobi Conference, in which was discussed the unprecedented growth of developing countries' debt and the acute famine in Africa.

- The **Empowerment Approach** sought to promote women's liberation. It envisioned to break with the "pre-modern" kinship that "trapped" women in patriarchal and polygynous relations. In the **1980's**, it was seen as "weapon for the weak", especially for grassroots.
- In the **1990's**, Financial International Institutions (FII) and Development Agencies adopted this as a way to enhance efficiency and productivity without changing the status quo. (Hickle, 2014) Alternative development saw it as an opportunity for social transformations and for achieving gender equality. (Monsen, 2010)
- This perspective fostered the girl effect idea. It claimed that labour and wage would promote women's liberation and this would be their passport for "modern" kinship. (Hickle, 2014)

- However, it strengthened the capitalist appropriation of anti-capitalist's and counter-culture's ideas of women's liberation. This means, it comprehended that if women had jobs and wages this would promote development and their liberation, however it did not take into consideration the work's condition and the low wages.
- In the 2000's, the empowerment discussed focused on to what extent promoting education, jobs and representation really enhanced women's lives and their sociability (Kabeer,2005). It is possible to have femocrats (Mama,1995) as leaders, and how it can be prevented?

- **Gender and Environment (GED)** was based on ecofeminist views, especially those of Vandana Shiva (1989). They sponsored an anti-patriarchal, decentralized interdependent and sustainable model. Since they believed colonialism and environmental degradation were associated to women's lives. (Monsen,2010)
- In **1995**, there was the UN Beijing Conference. In this context emerged the **Mainstreaming Gender Equality** perspective. Where 189 countries affirmed that advancement of women and the achievement of equality with men are fundamental to promote social justice and human rights.
- According to Momsen (2010), although WID, GAD and WAD had largely converged in the 1990s, new perspectives emerged.

- In the 1990's, the World Bank started including other issues, such as sustainability, HIV/AIDS, health care, crime and violence, freedom of choice, among others in its development policies (Bedford, 2009) .
- This represented a shift in the Bank's policy, which previously focused only on economic development, and at this moment started taking into account social, environmental and political development.

- This shift was influenced by the **capability approach**. Which comprehended that the policy agenda should interfere with the intimate realities of human relatedness. It was based on Amartya Sen's work "Development as Freedom". In which he advocates in favour of a change of focus in economic measures (such as GDP) to basic needs. Therefore, the state should provide provisions for health care, education and other basic needs (Rai,2011) .

2000's Millenium Development Goals



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