

Devaki Jain

## Globalisation, Gender and Poverty

**Sustainable Development is ... that which the poor, especially poor women can sustain not what sustains the poor**

*Presented at*

UNFPA PANEL: Population in Sustainable Development: Reproductive Health and Gender in Poverty Reduction, August 27, 2002

It is a privilege to be on this panel, and I thank the Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr Thoraya Obaid and her colleagues for honouring me thus. I am also especially pleased and privileged to be sharing the platform with Minister Trevor Manuel, as it brings back memories of the extremely inspiring months I had in South Africa, when my husband was High Commissioner of India, here I used to know Trevor then, shared platforms with him, both in Joburg and in Cape Town. South African - people and leaders - gripped us at that time. We received so much affection and inclusion, that both my husband and I used to call ourselves South Africans. So I am delighted to have a chance to share some moments with him and to hear from him, how South Africa, my second home, is doing and to thank him for those times.

I am also delighted to be with the UNFPA family, which has always included the friends from Japan. You would be interested to know that when UNFPA took an eminent persons group to Tokyo<sup>1</sup> in January 1994 prior to the Cairo ICPD Conference, Japanese women friends including Ms Akiko Domoto who is now a governor in Japan, Dr Hiroko Hara<sup>2</sup> who is here and who is Representative of JAWW (Japan Women's Watch) under APWW (Asia Pacific Women's Watch), Vice Representative of Japan's Network for Women and Health and others organised a special consultation for me with Japanese women. They were shocked to find that they would have no voice in Cairo, as they had no NGO specifically engaged in this subject and even if there was, had not registered for the conference and the last date was over. We acted quickly and efficiently, we rang up Dr Sadik's office and got special permission and the Japan's Network for Women and Health, an NGO was born and it played a significant role in Cairo. My association with Japan continues to this day, and I applaud Japan for playing such a sensitive role in advancing women's rights, with its support to UNFPA.

I must confess that I find it difficult to plunge into what would be a typical technical presentation on poverty, women and globalisation. For as we arrive in Johannesburg our minds are bombed with so many sharp facts – there will be no water to drink for millions of people in India, Half of Bangladesh will be submerged – there is a brown cloud, full of disease giving particles above the Northern part of India, Pakistan and the lands above that area. Countries, their governments are refusing to sign treaties, which will contain this havoc, blaming each other for default. And so there is gloom about the outcome of this conference for the future of the planet. Hundreds of representatives of civil society organisations are

---

<sup>1</sup> Jain, Devaki: *Women and Population at the Meeting of eminent persons, Tokyo, January 26<sup>th</sup> –28<sup>th</sup>, 1994.*

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Hiroko Hara (Professor, Emeritus, Ochanomizu University), and Professor, The University of the Air

giving creative ideas on how to ensure planet safety, criticising the Governments, the funding agencies and the global structures. But the deadlocks it is predicted will continue, the enthusiasm and struggles of the “outside” will also continue.

Then there is the intensity of the recent (post Sep.11<sup>th</sup>) arrival of religious difference as a source of not only conflict, but militant intolerance by arrogant power which I suggest takes the World back to the days of the Crusaders of Medieval times<sup>3</sup>. To the dark ages when bigotry was the limit to which the human imagination could go. Since then, not only the Enlightenment in the West, but the intellectual expression of societies in the ‘South’ and the ‘East’ had grown beyond, or extended the boundary of imagination to other categories of stratification and division, such as class, ethnicity, caste, gender, occupation. Nations identified themselves not as *Christian* and *Pagan* but *newly liberated* and *colonial*. Religion as conqueror was eroded in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and there was a sharp fall in attendance in churches, temples, mosques, worldwide.

Amartya Sen : In a lecture *Exclusion “and Inclusion* (2001)<sup>4</sup> has warned of the dangers of such attitudes and analysis, by categorising the population of the world into those belonging to ‘the Islamic world’, ‘the Christian world’, ‘the Hindu world’, ‘the Buddhist world’, etc., the divisive power of classificatory priority is implicitly used to place people firmly inside a unique set of rigid boxes. Other divisions (say, between the rich and the poor, between members of different classes and occupations, between people of different politics, between distinct nationalities and residential locations, between language groups, etc.) are all submerged by this allegedly pre-eminent way of seeing the differences between people. . . .

. . . The basic weakness of the thesis of ‘clash of civilisation’ lies in its programme of categorising people of the world according to the one-allegedly commanding-system of classification.’

Our shared humanity gets savagely challenged when the confrontation is unified into one allegedly dominant system of classification; this is much more divisive than the universe of plural and diverse categorisations that shape the world in which we live. Plural diversity can be a great unifier in a way a unique system of overarching divisions is not’

. . . ‘Such boxing (*my words*) ‘is potentially a great ethical and political hazard, with far-reaching consequences on **human rights**.’ He then continues, ‘I would argue that the main hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies in the **plurality of our identities**, which cut across each other and works against sharp divisions around one single hardened line of impenetrable division” ,

and indeed I would say some of the happenings in India – where our firm secular democracy got shaken in Gujarat was due to this “emphasising” of old theological differences, as these new civilisational discourses do divide and create hate.

Then there is the global coalition which is driving countries like ours, into more militarisation, / more defence deals with Northern countries – and simultaneously new ordinances which can arrest without trial – the Anti Terrorism Acts. The post-September 11th global coalition

---

<sup>3</sup> Devaki Jain, *For Whom the Bell Tolls Democracy and Development in South Asia*, Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Vol. 15 Number 2, 2002

<sup>4</sup> Amartya Sen *Exclusion and Inclusion* at a South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR) Convention in 2001 on the theme ‘Including the Excluded’

assumes extraordinary economic and political power, limiting the spaces available to nations outside of its ambit to define their political and economic programmes. Shekhar Gupta, one of our brightest editors of a national newspaper had this to say on this new *powerdom*

‘The important thing is not that we have changed. But that everything, the world around us, has changed so completely that no one, not China not Russia, not even Cuba, is protesting. There is, however, more to this new world than mere unipolarity. That would have been simpler to deal with. You can always stand up to hegemony. But what do you do with a world where the big boys cartelise in a manner unprecedented in history? They think and act together, with a remarkable common sense of purpose and, ostensibly, towards greater common good. ... The US, China, United Europe and Russia, are the four powers that circumscribe this world’<sup>5</sup>

Further, this limits the options of those nations for inward looking initiatives that create greater sovereignty. Legal measures like India’s Prevention Of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO), modelled, according to the Law Minister of India, Arun Jaitley, on anti-terrorism laws in the United States and Britain, arm the state with authoritarian powers and move the centre of power from the legislatures to the executive, the police and the military.<sup>6</sup> Strengthening security, expanding and fortifying the military are also centrist processes – reversing the process of devolution of economic and political power and hence reducing the participation component of governance. This will also reduce transparency and accountability in governance, as security issues, including pursuit of terrorists, are by nature secretive and underground. Ultimately, post-September 11<sup>th</sup> ‘global’ activity will change all the variables of political and economic concerns in South Asia<sup>7</sup>. The threat really is to democracy – and democracy is as crucial as Bread for removal of Poverty.<sup>8</sup>

My first proposition then is that we, all of us, need to pause and *think*. Really think retrospect on the journeys that we have all taken,- academics, activists, govts and the agencies, on the *how* of getting our so called more humane, more ground experience generated, more environment friendly more sustainable development, more “peace” making programme ideas into becoming effective – into becoming practice. The Summits their mandates, the panels, the events are becoming stereo typical and are tread milling our energy.

**I am working on a book** – a volume, part of a series of 14 volumes which try to capture the **intellectual history of the UN** – over the last 50 years.<sup>9</sup> I am invited by the Project to write the volume related to women, and I have called it “Women enrich the UN and Development” – to emphasize, underline women’s agency (a term made popular by Prof. Amartya Sen) – to project women as the “givers”, and not only as the recipients: not the needy, the “patients” as he metaphors in the another lecture.

---

<sup>5</sup>Gupta, Shekhar ‘Welcome to Moscowashington: After Sept 11, the Big Boys are Joining Hands, How do we Play Ours?’ *The New Indian Express*, New Delhi, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2002 p. 10

<sup>6</sup>Chennai, ‘Op-Ed: Politics and Terrorism Issues.’ *The Hindu*, , 6 December 2001, p.10

<sup>7</sup>Devaki Jain, *For Whom the Bell Tolls Democracy and Development in South Asia*, Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Vol. 15 Number 2, 2002

<sup>8</sup>Devaki Jain The Poverty Thing (Or This thing called ‘Poverty’) Presented at a special event organised by UNDP, New York May 20, 1997

<sup>9</sup>There is a website for the project [www.unhistory.org](http://www.unhistory.org). The administration office is located in the Ralph Bunch PG Centre at CUNY, the project is called the United Nations Intellectual History Project. The volumes will be published by Indiana University Press, 2002-2003.

**I have been at it for the last 15 months** – and I must confess that apart from the difficulties of finding material which reveals women’s intellectual contributions and its source – vis-à-vis UN – the tracing of the journey – the first findings – were tedious, if not irritating. In reviewing history *I have been stunned, deeply disturbed and saddened to see the wastage of so much energy and commitment, so many ideas – the smug sense of forward movement by those who are engaged at the top and in this kind of forum and the terrible condition in which men and women are living, dying demeaning themselves and even demonising themselves amongs the poor. It is outrageous and an indictment on the kind of energy that is gathered here. Every space is cracking and most of the worlds people are making the cracks wider.*

The first findings – whether it is in relation to the journey on the theme War and Peace, or Rights and Wrongs (there are the titles of my second & third chapters) or the description and performance of the various structures, agencies, that relate to women, my first chapter, (I call the Theatre and the Players), suggest that time has stood still. Some of the old issues, of the late 40’s / early 50’s have reappeared as frontal on the agenda of the UN: have come full circle over the last fifty years: and I find that the “gendered” responses of the system, are unchanged.

Throughout this period, in fact more vividly in the Pre 1975 phase ,It was shocking to find that it was always women who took up an initiative for women, inside and outside. Move it did and we all know the many conventions / treaties / the setting up of the CSW, - the CEDAW, the Conferences as spaces for building global alliances and soon. *But seen in retrospect, as an overall balance sheet, the outcomes, the perceptions, the exclusions and inclusions reflect not a glass ceiling, but a stone wall: not only of patriarchy and masculine structures and procedures, but an unwillingness to open the ‘third eye’ to the knowledge, the brilliance, the transformational work of women.*

Yet all the agencies which are financing projects, like the World bank, are talking of participation, **“voices of the poor”** and every one, and I mean everyone including the most conservative, and theocratic states are talking of **“commitment to women’s empowerment”**. Everything seems progressive and right – so what went wrong?

What went wrong? Why even such a vibrant international force like the women’s movement, and its UN focal points of support like UNFPA, UNIFEM and so much else, has not been able to get its knowledge and voice to leap across to the powers that control **industry, agriculture, production techniques, development, economic theory , and most of all money?** Or simultaneously organise itself to be a power in itself, creating that transformation with its own political will ?

Just a month ago, on 23<sup>rd</sup> - 26th July 2002, to be precise, some of us got together in Kampala, on the side lines of the 8<sup>th</sup> International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women, organised by Department of Women and Gender Studies, Makerere University, Kampala; Uganda, just to ask ourselves this question. Dr Nafis Sadik former Executive Director of UNFPA was our principal motivator and encouraged the group to revive the vitality, value focus and power of the international women’s movement, for poverty eradication. Dr Thoraya Obaid is also a member of this informal group which is rethinking, “the how” of getting changes on the ground; wiping out the shame of a world holding so many women and girls and babies in such

abominable conditions of deprivation, oppression, Assault neglect and closeness to death. We were troubled by the real life situation of women: as well as the larger picture ,world events and the new ways of dividing the world, and the people within this world

We talked of how to launch a campaign for achieving feminist goals such as a fair and peaceful world, free of brutality, violence and deep discrimination. **We agreed that we need to develop a global and powerful voice to over power this re -emergence of the Dark Ages**, the atmospherics of Medieval Europe, of the Sword and the Chalice, suggesting that it is some of these discourses that **a revitalised, more united international women’s movement should challenge: and replace such “dialogues across civilizations” with Feminist dialogues , and a redefinition of what is civilisation?**

We argued for a strong political move by women **to reclaim Democracy and Development** through the mobilisation of those engaged locally, through the concept of the inverted pyramid, and the concept of *think locally and act globally* (not the other way around), spreading wide, or bubbling up to become a tidal wave at the macro or global level.,

Having said all this what I want to do is to share two very different, almost unrelated arguments / view points:

One related to a re-construction of economic theory for poverty eradication

Two a proposal to re-invoke Employment as a poverty eradication tool which also liberates women.

First argue that almost all the current responses to poverty eradication – be it from the growth is the answer, to the anti globalisation positions, are flawed. I would like to propose that the very basis of economic theory, the very factors from which the analysis of economic change and growth are premised has to be changed, rebuilt . It is not enough to replace GDP, by HDI – or to argue for social security, even the rights frameworks that is now the fashion,; nor even the transfers of resources : the removal of assymetrical trade relations that is being negotiated here . That they all spring from the same understanding of economic theory , and that unless economic theory itself is stood on its head, poverty cannot be eradicated

It is not enough for women to put forward , what is being put forward by some women’s groups e g at the WSSD, right now and epitomised in a document released by the “From Rio to Johannesburg: What’s Good for Women is Good for the World” (Annexure I)

“Gender myopia—or blindness to women’s issues—still distorts environmental, economic, and health policies. Today, a full decade after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, governments, development agencies, and even some NGOs remain resolutely patriarchal. Despite the widespread belief that women “have come a long way” in achieving improved social and economic status, they continue to face many of the same obstacles they did ten years ago. And in some cases, these problems have become even more formidable.<sup>10</sup>

I am sceptical about this call being any different from our other calls, even if we are in everwidening circles of collective voice .And second that one of the most wholesome and do able economic reasonings for poverty eradication in a safe planet has been developed by Gandhi, M K Gandhi, popularly known as Mahatma Gandhi. His ideas for a prosperous

political economy, also included environmental conservation, linking all of nature and eradication of poverty with sustainability. I would like to show how his ideas and practical suggestions *would define sustainable development as that development that can be sustained by the poor, as different from that development which sustains the poor . Thus giving Poor , agency* to use Prof Sen's concept, and not taking the need based approach , which he in another place critiques, saying

We need a vision of mankind not as *patients* whose interests have to be looked after, but as *agents* who can do effective things – both individually and jointly. We also have to go beyond the role of human beings specifically as ‘consumers’ or as ‘people with needs’, and consider, more broadly, their general role as agents of change who can – given the opportunity – think, assess, evaluate, resolve, inspire, agitate, and through these means, reshape the world.<sup>11</sup>

I would spell out Gandhi's actual ground level “performance “/ strategies to prove my point. I would then cut across all the themes, events, milestones and commitments of WSSD and the several events preceding it , and argue against one or two presumptions that the current approaches to poverty eradication makes.

**What I would like to do, is to argue that the most basic requirement for removal of poverty ,** and a requirement that brings with it all the necessary conditions for *choice*, identified by all as the basis of freedom, of rights; as well the sense of dignity, worth that is enshrined in the UN charter – **is work , livelihood , employment, rewarded labour**. One can choose the term, and not quarrel with it .

I would like to continue with the argument, and suggest that the theories on which the current approach to poverty removal are based, namely theories of growth of GDP as well, as investment in Social Development, human development , are inadequate, if not wrongly premised . I would suggest that current theories of economic growth, as well as the measures of progress have to be challenged if poverty has to be removed, or reduced

I would support my arguments from the debates in India as well as the work being done by some of the regional development organizations such as SADC and ESCAP on growth models for maximizing employment , with the given human and physical resources

The link between this pre occupation with macro economics and poverty and gender and rights within it would be understandable I am sure to all of you, - as it is increasingly being understood that the local or the grassroots options and opportunities are extremely dependent on the macro.

I would like to link that critique to the crucial issue of women's fertility, which - like the rose, which by whatever name it is called , is but a rose,- becomes the central preoccupation of the population and development discourse under whatever auspices it is held. I would illustrate my argument with examples from India.- which space I always feel or think, is like a large laboratory of experience, especially in relation to poverty eradication, and women's empowerment .

I wanted to call the proposals that I wish to put forward, , Beyond Amartya Sen, to suggest that transforming development ideas into the rights framework,as he has done in the HDR

---

<sup>11</sup> Amartya Sen, ‘Transition to Sustainability in the 21st Century’, Keynote Address, at the Inter- Academy Panel called Sustainability and Freedom on International Issues, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2000.

2000, or even into advocacy for democracy as is done in the 2002 HDR, which acknowledges his advice, is not enough. But I withdraw from such audacity, as he is someone who can argue me out of my skin, and also might have in fact thought through all this anyway. And dragging him in, could be misconstrued as using him to draw attention to myself. He is someone whom I can call a friend of many years, and who has carried the poverty and gender issue into the most significant levels of thought and advocacy, as we all know. So I honour him

Today those who are working with the poor and with women, are speaking against development, renaming the term or the goal as Transformation. Or as seven freedoms (UNDP HDR 2000)<sup>12</sup>, from hunger and other of the basic needs. They are renaming per capita income as human wellbeing, poverty as deprivation, defence against poverty as human security. They are challenging GDP as a measure of progress, providing other indications of progress, as done by Halstead and Rowe who asked **'If the GDP is Up, Why is America Down?'**<sup>13</sup> **Their argument was that incremental increase in the American GDP was due to the increase in the production of security equipment, which in turn was a result of increasing incidence of crime in the USA, and therefore, 'GDP was a measure of social decay'!**

Some are arguing that Growth of GDP is the best way to pull people out of poverty, others that it is investment in social inputs, social security. Others are challenging globalisation and pointing to it as the extension and revival of capitalism, and the main source of the perpetuation of poverty and continuation and increase in inequality

A statement that has come out of one of an Asian women's consultations prior to WSSD, challenges the HDR approach too **"we lament that the discussion on human development in the context of sustainable development limits gender equality to progress based on the following indicators: ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education; ratio of young literate females to males; maternal mortality."**

They go on to say, "While we recognise the importance of these indicators especially in upgrading the status of women in Cambodia (Kemara Report), gender inequality still abounds in other similarly important aspects of sustainable development (Seoul Women's Network Declaration). **Women continue to be marginalised because of sex, race, ethnicity and other socio-political status as reflected in women's lack of access to and control of resources. The frequent reliance on micro-schemes and initiatives by States to address macro, systemic and structural problems shows the lack of political will to realise women's empowerment. Globalisation has resulted in the wresting of economic and political control from local communities to multinational and transnational actors manifest in the patenting and commodification of life forms by these corporations (Amihan)."**

They also point out that from the women's perspective, the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) included in the WTO commitments has opened doors to cheap food imports and export-oriented cash-crop agriculture and women farmers and workers have to work longer and harder to ensure family survival and some women ended up in bonded labour because of debts

---

<sup>12</sup> Freedom from discrimination, from fear, of thought and speech, from want, to develop and realise one's potential, from injustice and violations of the rule of law, freedom for decent work

<sup>13</sup>C.T. Cobb C.T. Halstead and Jonathan Rowe, 'If the GDP is Up, Why is America Down?', *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 1995. pp 62-78

(APWLD AoA Research). (*Women's Report Peoples' Forum On Sustainable Development Phnom Penh, Cambodia 25 November 2001*).

**I would like to suggest that none of these modifications of current thought, theories are enough or the appropriate response .They have not been able to roll back the Tanks that are trampling over poor women, and even what we know as, being civilised.**

**I start my “new “ reconstructed economics from the proposition that *Economics is about power . Politics is about control of that power. If economics has gone wrong, as indeed it seems to have,<sup>14</sup> it is because of too little politics, not too much.***

This matches with the latest comment by Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator, UNDP, who in his Foreword to the Human Development Report 2002, says :

***“This Human Development Report is first and foremost about the idea that politics is as important to successful development as economics. Sustained poverty reduction requires equitable growth – but it also requires that poor people have political power.”***

*I wonder if he was recording my views , as this was a proposition I had put forward in 1997 , when I was invited by Gus Speth , the then administrator to make a presentation before the UNDP's Board on Poverty eradication – most probably not, but I was mighty pleased to read his unequivocal statement on the politics of economics*

The perception of politics varies a great deal according to class. Elites see politics as a dirty game requiring corruption and compromise. For the poor politics - the use of political rights and processes is the salt of life. Citizens in the US are lethargic in voting - 36% voter turn out in the elections in 1995. Per contra, Indian citizens voter turn out is in the range 45-70 with women almost equal to men in turn out. Another stunning example of the importance of such simple political rights as voting rights, was seen during the first General Elections of free South Africa.

***I would argue that political rights - vehicles to express them and negotiate them, without inviting genocide or holocaust is key to justice - which in turn is key to eradication of disparity, hence discrimination and hence poverty. Hence, I will not only argue for greater emphasis on the links between politics and poverty - the politics of poverty, - but also how poor especially women have used and transformed economics through political action. I have many examples of this in my many papers***

For example, a review I made of six experiences of spontaneous mass based collective action by women namely, the Chipko in the Himalayas against forest felling; the anti -arrack in Andhra against country liquor; in Ahmedabad against the acquisition of vending space; in Manipur against alcohol and in Assam, against land settlement- show how women respond when there is a threat to livelihood or to social peace or its reverse, when there is domestic violence. These are all illustrations of women's (especially poor or disadvantaged women's) collective action which both reveal how women have been able to change political agendas as well as what can be identified as the 'difference' between women's & men's views and 'political' agendas. (*Can Women Be a Political Force, in Vocabulary of Women's Politics, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, New Delhi, 2001*)

---

<sup>14</sup> UNDP (1996) Human Development Report. Oxford University Press; New York

I would propose that poverty eradication is a dynamic and purposeful engine of growth, so that it becomes possible to make currency out of a new theoretical proposition I have called “Bubbling Up Theory of Growth”. **which counters** the old ‘Trickling Down Theory of Growth’. The Bubbling up theory argues that the process of removal of poverty can itself be an engine of growth, that the incomes and capabilities of those who are currently poor has the potential to generate demand which in turn will **engine production**, but of goods that are immediately needed by the poor which are **currently peripheral in production**. The oiling, then, of this engine will bubble up and fire the economy, in a much more broad based manner. Unlike export led growth, it will not skew production and trade into the elite trap, which is **accentuating** disparities and creating discontent... (Jain: 1998)

I would say that removal of poverty has to be constructed slowly and steadily, like the construction of peace, with a magical amalgam of many dimensions and elements, strongly inclusive of personal ethics.

I would say that poverty is the outcome of the tolerance of inequality by all of us and if there is a moral element in the amalgam it needs to be an ethic of intolerance of inequality of a certain kind – namely the existence of acute human deprivation in the midst of plenty. Such situations must be seen by us as an abomination – a rebuttal of humanness and personally redressed. Poverty is a reflection of inequality, and inequality is one of the causes of poverty

Third to all the various ways in which poverty has been decomposed, including the concept of deprivation, I would add discrimination. I would say that the existence of poor people is due to discrimination in all policies, political social and economic, a discrimination which sustains disparities and, **the existence of women at the bottom of the poverty pile is an endorsement of discrimination.**

Hence responses to this phenomena or “thing” called poverty have to react to discrimination and therefore need to be built around affirmative action, positive discrimination, an affirmation of rights, a political approach even more than an economic approach political restructuring key to poverty eradication.

The increasing prevalence of the phenomena of suicide bombers , one can argue , can be linked to persistent poverty, especially lack of opportunities for what is called work with dignity; inequality perpetuated and enlarged by the effect of visual media; intensification of anger at the inequality; injustice and invasive persecution; accompanied by the carelessness about losing lives in a space where "losing-life" is not such a unique happening, can explain the increasing occurrence of human bombs.

When I was a member of the Eminent Persons’ Group for the Graca Machel Study team (*Impact of War on Children*) set up by the UN to study the impact of armed conflict on children we found that poverty drives children into becoming child soldiers and entering guerrilla groups, like the Tamil tigers in Sri Lanka, who, in turn specialise in human bomb attacks.. One such attack killed our former Prime Minister, the young Rajiv Gandhi. . Is this *fearlessness* cultivated because of proximity to death? Life can be cheap in these circumstances, where death is a daily possibility for different reasons for different individuals in a family.

The fear of death which is the most haunting tangible fear in comfortable societies which have the basic security of food, health care, livelihood, clean and low population environments, does not seem to be as much of a consciousness, in the non-Anglo Saxon, non-European

This phenomenon could also be a reason for the larger prevalence of the human bomb in Asia, starting with West Asia. The men who killed themselves while flying into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, were human bombs, stating what is being expressed by the Palestinians today in West Asia. It is explaining the circumstances, that not only have propelled them, but continue to propel others, like Wafa Idris, who was least like an Islamic fundamentalist or congenital terrorist, to get into a bus with a bomb on her back.

It is only introspection that will help us understand and respond to the phenomenon. "Careless attitude" will increase if inequalities are further exacerbated by fundamentalist and "exclusivity" abuses by those who hold economic and political power. Such arrogance, couched in civilisational and religious talks, will add to the "labour force", the armies and contingents which will make the offer of what is called in the military language of India and Pakistan, *the supreme sacrifice*; young people who will throw away their lives as human bombs, because life is not worth living; or become uncontrolled criminals, unruly mobs, looters and protesters around every street corner, as obstructionists to all peaceful initiatives, as worshippers of death through violence.

***There are now many reports (and I quote some statistics here) which show the increase in inequality and unrest in the world , increasing particularly in the last decade of globalisation . The latest UNDP HDR 2002 also underscores this point.***

It shows growing division between those who prosper in the new world – and those who do not, these trends are deeply troubling globalisation is forging greater interdependence, yet the world seems more fragmented, between the rich and the poor, between the powerful and powerless, between those who welcome the new global economy and those who demand a different course. The anti globalisation movement, the most significant social movement, of our times, is demanding greater social justice, not just handouts for the poor. All this adds up to a work in urgent need of a political order that can achieve greater inclusion, an order in which all people and countries can have a say in decisions that affect their future and one with rules and institutions which command trust among all people and countries"<sup>15</sup>.

***In my opinion one person who actually prepared and practiced the magical amalgam of morals, politics and economics which I suggest is necessary for removing this blot of poverty on our existence is Mahatma Gandhi, and at the risk of inviting ridicule I want to venture into a view of him. It is my view that every era needs an ideologue, a kind of pole around which the good people can mobilise. And for this era it could be Gandhi. He was a strategic economist. His economic ideas linked to his political symbolism – his mass mobilisation – was brilliant. I suggest we bring him back into critical analysis in the discourse on political economy in discussions of development – not isolate him only in peace and conflict resolution debates.***

He was not a saint or a spiritual figure as he is often projected. His clothing looks like that of some of the Hindu sadhus or hermits, but actually it was a loin cloth like an agricultural labourer would wear in India: Much of his life style choices were symbolic, a language of symbols to communicate with the Indian masses.

---

<sup>15</sup> Sakiko Fukuda Parr, Launch of the Human Development Report 2002, 24 July 2002, Manila, Philippines.

When Gandhiji picked up a fistful of salt from the beaches of Gujarat, he was not trying to give free salt to the people of India. It was a symbol, an idiom of political assertion, but in a language, a vocabulary which represented the masses of people, not the elites. When President Mandela said in his inaugural speech, we want *Bread water* and salt it was not that he wanted to limit the life style of his people to bread with salt and water: it was to signal the aspirations of the masses again a vocabulary which was representative both of political assertion and identification with the deprived. Imagine if these actions and words had been interpreted in their literal sense? That Gandhiji wanted to give free salt or that Mandela only wants bread with salt and water for his people? How absurd it would have been? Imagine if the salt satyagraha had not fired the imagination of Indians and opened the flood gates of the movement for freedom? What a loss to the grammar and method of politics and most of all to democratic processes which attempt to move the State towards justice?

Of course he had his eccentricities as we all have. I often interpret his dietary rules about eating uncooked food, sprouts and nuts as linked to his message to men that their wives should not be cooking elaborate meals for them. If people ate these kinds of foods, as indeed now they are eating pre-cooked foods, then household drudgery for women would be removed. This issue of total identification with the poor, getting under their skin, not only muting difference but absorbing difference, -and beginning the journey of transformation from their location; and this moral embarrassment with injustice, and embodying that injustice in one self, seems to me sound political economy, and at least less distant from the reality of the poor. (Johnson, 1997)

Gandhi offers a discriminating tool, or norm that he calls his "talisman" and I have called the "**bubbling up theory of growth**". To quote Gandhi and his talisman, "Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man/woman whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him.....". My friend Mahbub Ul Haq has also given the talisman pride of place in his South Asia Human Development report.1999.

There was a wisdom both in Karl Marx and Mahatma Gandhi in addressing inequality as the crux of the matter; in addressing the rich, the "haves" - even though there is a crucial difference in their analysis as well as their advice. Marx and his analysis is well-known. But Gandhi's can be restated. While Marx dealt with inequality through restructuring the economic system and making the State all powerful, Gandhi sought political solutions based on social negotiations and a "low profile" State.

Gandhi like Marx and Hobbes before him saw the human being as a limited creature - capable of cruelty, narrow-mindedness, greed and violence and required strong medicine to be socially manageable. Indeed, when we *see* starving people especially women and children marching in thousands across national boundaries trying to escape from violence; when we *hear* that when child refugees are crossing the border security personnel pick up girl children, to be sold into the flesh trade; when we turn away from the expropriation of earth, water and mountains for 'growth'—then their perceptions seem correct.

While orthodox socialism addresses itself to inequality based on ownership of means of production, Gandhi focussed on inequality in consumption. His argument or his advocacy for austerity, simplicity in life style was based on developing in Indians, a consciousness of the problems of the poor. To consume much food or own many clothes or display many clothes when the neighbourhood was filled with those who could neither eat or clothe themselves, was a form of violence. There is a beautiful story of how a child living near the Sabarmati Ashram asked Gandhi why he only wore a dhoti and no shirt. The child offered to bring Gandhi a shirt. Gandhi is supposed to have said that he will wear a shirt when all the millions

of shirtless Indians could also afford a shirt. Thus the practice of simplicity was in some sense an attempt to emulate or imitate the life of those who did not have enough and thereby release resources to be able to provide for those who did not have enough.

Gandhi took this technique of identification with the “deprived” into many other domains - a form of melting down hierarchies. In the Ashrams, or collectives that Gandhi built, in those days, **roles** were constantly transposed to dismantle hierarchies. For example, everyone - men, women, children - had to do manual work as well as "meditational" work : so that the intellectual or the educated would not look down on the manual. Brahmins had to lift night soil so that night soil lifting could not **hold** stigma and untouchability. Persons belonging to all the diverse religions in India had to recite the prayers of **all** the religions - as a Hindu would read the Qoran, or the Christian, the Hindu Prayer. Effacing distance through **muting** the kind of difference that **connotes** hierarchy.

He had a different response<sup>16</sup> to the “denouncement of women” who deviated from patriarchal fixes, the given stereotyping of male-female roles and codes of behaviour. He suggested to women that they resist this male order - and refuse to marry, refuse to have sex, refuse jewellery, and even refuse to cook. He believed that such collective resistance by women would be the only way to liberate themselves from the chains of gender-apartheid. He said, "Marriage is an institution designed by men to tyrannise women. More often than not a woman's time is taken up, not by the performance of essential domestic duties, but in catering for the egoistic pleasures of her lord and master". He wrote. "To me, this domestic slavery of the kitchen too is a remnant of barbarism. It is high time that our womankind was freed from this incubus". Imagine this was said in the 1930s - long before feminism became a vivid ideology.

Gandhi persuaded men to cook, clean dishes, knit; do what are called "women's jobs". He tried to shift mental perceptions of the difference between men and women by transposing traditional roles. This in a way is the Scandinavian Model, for which Scandinavia have been given the 1st rank in the HDR 1995.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps if Gandhi had his way, we in India would have earned that rank long ago, without the immense expenditure of building a support system that can provide parental leave etc. – not an affordable solution for us in low resource countries.

*Some of these ideas may seem extremist and old fashioned, but Gandhi was reacting to what he felt was the terrible fact of female subordination, in a caste- ridden, hierarchical and diverse society. He saw the discrimination within discrimination - the deep roots of gender injustice.*<sup>18</sup>

*I am fascinated by this technique as it illustrates how much of these oppression related hierarchies are in the mind. It suggests to me that a critical factor in changing the relations of power between men and women, for example, is to emphasize the difference between men and women, not only through their biology and its consequences, but in their moral,*

---

<sup>16</sup> Mernissi, Fatima. (1986). *Feminity as Subversion: Reflection on the Muslim Concept of Nushtuz* in Devaki Jain and Diana Eck (eds.) *Speaking of Faith - Cross Cultural Perspectives on Women , Religion and Social Change*. Kali for Women; New Delhi.

See also Amoah, Elizabeth. *Women, Witches and Social Change in Ghana*. in *Ibid*.

See also Topley and Marjorie (1975). *Marriage Resistance in Rural Kwantung* in Margery Wolfe and Roxanne Witke (eds.) *Women in Chinese Society*. Stanfor University Press. Pages 86-88.

<sup>17</sup> UNDP (1995) *Human Development Report*. Oxford University Press; New York.

<sup>18</sup> Jain, Devaki. (1996) *op.cit*.

*methodological and intellectual ways. I do not suggest that these differences are physiologically fixed, they do emerge from the difference in women's life experience.*<sup>19</sup>

Gandhi provides the most do able and well argued ideas and there is need for us to consider his ideas for the philosophical underpinnings of approaches to social and political transformation whether it is at the local, national or global level.

Imagine if in the last 50 years of Independence, every Indian administrator, politician, businessmen, educated person, every citizen had used the talisman ? Our entire goals of growth and progress would have been totally different. The poor and poverty eradication would have provided the best engine of growth as pushing them out of poverty would have been the input from us - 'the decision-makers'. And the momentum that we would have generated in pushing them out of poverty would have been the most powerful engine of growth. For, as they push themselves out of poverty, they would have not only generated incomes and purchasing power, but provided the most valuable of the factors of development - a less unequal society, made up of healthy, educated, skilled "labour".

The Human Development Report 1996 has very illuminating remarks to make on this issue of growth, poverty and inequality. One of the most alarming propositions that it makes - based on its data based review of the world - is that frequently growth is generating inequality, perpetuating or increasing the distance between the richer segments and the poorest segments. This distance, as it increases, provides the basic fuel for conflict, war crime, violence. This distance is enlarged by the availability of vivid media, international and national - commercial television, constantly exposing the "have nots" to what the "haves" are able to enjoy.

This consumption based inequality preoccupied Gandhi even before we confronted it in vivid forms in which it is operating today.<sup>20</sup>

Gandhi was also willing to use market forces. For example, he proposed that consumers only buy goods produced by hand, thus giving an opportunity for millions of hands to earn a living. He argued that by buying hand made goods, consumers were putting income directly into the hands of producers. He was not arguing that production should be socialised or that trade should be nationalised, but asking Indians to exercise their vote as citizens, their economic vote, in favour of their own brothers and sisters. Once again it was a policy which discriminated in favour of the poor.

Gandhi tried to deal with oppressive power through personal example of appealing to the mind. He also constantly built institutions to sustain this techniques. I would suggest that the poor are politicised around poverty - especially its deprivational and discriminatory aspects. What is needed is to give effective mechanisms for articulating this politics.

## **Section II**

---

<sup>19</sup> Jain, Devaki (1996) Minds, Not Bodies - Expanding the notion of Gender in Development. Bradford Morse memorial Lecture. UNDP, Beijing, 5th September 1995. Published in Devaki Jain (1996) op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Crocker, David (1997). The Ethics of Consumption. The UNDP 1997 Report also wishes to build its measures of inequality and Poverty through the consumption - expenditure variable.

Has growth pulled the poor out of poverty ?? I would give below some facts and statements both from global docs, the latest being the 2002 HDR, as well as the Indian debate on this causal analysis .

What are some of the other ideas for poverty removal ? In earlier decades, work or income earning opportunities were considered the most basic need of everyone, including those who are in poverty . Why has this idea dropped off the screen ? and could it be that because jobs are not on any ones agenda, poverty is also not getting eradicated ?

Why are jobs, income earning capacity and opportunity so vital for women? Is there a link between their employment, formal or informal and their fertility ? to put it crudely ?What determines women's right to choose? Especially women in the poverty sets?

What would be the platform on which ideas like RCH and reproductive rights can be launched ? or the millennium goals reached ?

And that *power relations*, which in turn provide or impede the capability to make choices, to assert rights, are at the heart of the matter – are the key to any transformation be it of the unequal economic situations of regions, countries or people.

However in most parts of the world , including the advanced countries, notably the USA, they do not have that space, that capability nor that entitlement to use the language of Amartya Sen .

*Changing* the condition of women- the hardships they face whether through poverty or basic discrimination – requires monumental changes in the social perceptions of woman, across caste, class ethnicity and other differences. Studies are showing that owning assets, bringing in income, being educated, even having equality in the social indicators, like the closeness to one of the GDIs or GEMs, as in Kerala in India, has not reduced either violence against women or dowry rates- nor the basic disregard which makes an adult or adolescent male rape a girl child even if she is a relative or a neighbour. Fertility Manipulation is as prevalent, if not more prevalent in advanced countries, where new forms of fundamentalism and conservatism are reappearing than in the more chaotic poorer countries .

Deeply embedded fault lines and dirt have to be dug out, deeply mined out of the ground of social and psychological consciousness of men and women, not only in India but worldwide when addressing the issue of women, and this is compounded when they are also amongst the poor

***Gender equality, we are finding, is a necessary but not sufficient, condition of women's emancipation, not a sufficient condition for the removal of discrimination and oppression of the socially excluded sectors of society – women, dalits, handicapped . It is the relation of power, between men and women, gender relations that are crucial . At the world level the inequality in power to direct the global organizations , including the UN agencies is another important blockage to reaching out to the poorest in areas like health , including rch.***

**While the Cairo conference is praised for having moved the debate to women's rights, from the point of view of the developing countries, it was also hijacked by Issues which are current preoccupations of the wealthier countries, moving away from the traditional demands for greater support for the economic revival of the developing countries, for**

**health for all, ie a focus on braod based primary health care from birth to death as a right .**

(Jain, Devaki: Population and Gender Equality and Equity, a paper presented at the Millennium Conference on Population, Feb, 2000).

**HAS growth reduced poverty** Take the Indian debate

There is a consensus in India, amongst statisticians and economists, especially those in official agencies and mainstream academia,<sup>21 22</sup> that the last decade in India, called the decade of reform has seen a reduction of poverty, whichever way it is measured. There has always been a debate and strong disagreements on the measurement of poverty in India. At a workshop in January 2002 on Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation in New Delhi, hosted by the Government's Planning Commission and the World Bank, some of these differences were technically smoothened out.<sup>23</sup>

The poverty ratio at All-India level between 1993-94, when liberalization programme , euphemistically called *Reform* was initiated and 1999-2000, is estimated to have declined from 37.31 to 25.57 .In this period the growth rates were up from 4.1% to 6.7% <sup>24</sup>The overall finding would therefore suggest that growth, in this case the growth of 6.7 % in India between 1993-98, the highest ever, does in fact have a positive impact on poverty. This in turn would legitimise the prevailing theories, namely that rapid and high rates of economic growth is the best practice, or best method of reducing poverty, and in turn that such 'good' rates of economic growth that India experienced in the 90s was due to the economic reforms, centred on liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, even if only moderately and limpingly.

The problem with this finding is that it does not match with the findings of those who are knowledgeable about the poor, about women and other grounded groups. The design and the measures, the valuations embedded in those measures do not capture the second stream of information that is coming from the ground – namely that this growth is immiserising subsets of the poor, and these subsets are not 'pockets' but large populations, such as women amongst the poor Further that it is this very 'pattern of growth ' that is the culprit.

Shifting the debate to deprivation and human development measures, which would reveal the counter fact would still not provide the basis for the critique that is being argued here.

In India, if this contrary-to-given-belief trend has to be proved, and presented as facts which challenge the mainstream finding, it would be necessary for example to find ways of presenting trend data on poverty – which ever way it is counted, head count rate (HCR) or National Sample Survey (NSS) or National Accounts Statistics (NAS), with gender differentiation, apart from caste differentiation. But the rub is that the currently used measurement tools cannot capture the differentiation. It is difficult to try to separate the consumption, or / and the income of males from females poor households as their earnings especially of women are non monetised - <sup>25 26</sup> even though data on outcomes, like mortality

<sup>21</sup> Bhalla, Surjeet. 'Recounting the Poor' 2002

<sup>22</sup> Vaidyanathan, A, *Poverty and Development Policy*. R.R.Kale Memorial Lecture, 2000

<sup>23</sup> Deaton, Angus, Computing Prices and Poverty rates in India, 1999-2000. 2002

<sup>24</sup> Sundaram K and Suresh D Tendulkar 'Recent Debates on Data Base for Measurement of Poverty in India: Some Fresh Evidence.' (unpublished) December, 2001

All the above papers were presented at a Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop in New Delhi, hosted by the Government's Planning Commission and the World Bank 11/01/2002

<sup>25</sup> Jain, Devaki and Nirmala Banerjee, *Tyranny of the Household*. New Delhi, Shakti Books, 1985.

morbidity, employment and wage rates do indicate a strong gender derived difference in impact within the household.<sup>27</sup>

**There are, however, other types of data, although not trend data, that suggest that the situation of females, whether as infants, girls or women, is worsening. For example, the Approach Paper to the Indian Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) referring to the average growth rate of 6.5% in the Eighth and Ninth Plan periods, making India one of the ten fastest growing developing countries, says:**

**These positive developments are, however, clouded by other features, which give cause for concern suffering even more severe malnutrition. The infant mortality rate has stagnated at 72 per 1000 for the last several years. . More than half of the children 1-5 years old in rural areas are under-nourished, with girl children suffering even more severe malnutrition.<sup>28</sup>**

A study conducted by the World Bank in Uttar Pradesh which, with 160 million people is India's most populous state, reveals that a higher proportion of female workers than male workers is involved in low paid casual work, primarily in the agriculture sector.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, there has been a *feminisation* of the agricultural workforce, as the relative proportions of both female cultivators and female agricultural labourers have grown. Three quarters of women's employment days were in agriculture, as compared to only 40% of men's. Women were also three times more likely than men to work as agriculture labourers – work that is backbreaking, insecure, and low status. In contrast to men, women rarely held regular jobs or jobs in the non-farm sector, while these activities were left to the men. When they did obtain such employment, women were again relatively underpaid and confined to unskilled activities<sup>30</sup>.

Almost all the State level HDRs in India including Karnataka reveal the oddity of economic prosperity sleeping with destitution and immiseration. A cruel example of such mismatches is the infantile sex ratio in India , which has been worsening for the female of the species in the decade 1991 –2001. The Indian State of Punjab which is the most prosperous, being both the granary and a factory based economy, with the highest per capita income, and the lowest no of people below the poverty line (Its HDI value is 0.411 and is ranked 2 amongst India's 28 states ) also hold within it one of the largest drops a decrease of Fifty and above points in Child Sex Ratio (in Age Group 0-6 ). Therefore pointing out that that if the statistically derived poverty trend was gender differentiated, the finding would be exactly the reverse i.e. that while rates of growth were going up, incidence of poverty was increasing. Data collection efforts have not been able to capture this gender differentiation in the statistical trends of mainstream household and other surveys, for important reasons, which deserve some attention

Women over represented among the poor

---

<sup>26</sup> Jain, Devaki 'Valuing Work: Time as a Measure'. *Economic and Political Weekly* Mumbai, Vol. XXXI, No. 43, 1996

<sup>27</sup> *Human Development in Karnataka* Bangalore, Government of Karnataka 1999.

<sup>28</sup> Planning Commission, Government of India, *Approach to the Tenth Plan 2002-2007*, New Delhi, 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Valerie Kozel, and Barbara Parker 'A Profile and Diagnostic of the Poverty in Uttar Pradesh', World Bank, 2001., Paper presented at a Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop in New Delhi, hosted by the Government's Planning Commission and the World Bank, 11 January, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Jain, Devaki: *For Whom the Bell Tolls- Democracy and Development in South Asia*, 2002.

It is often suggested that there is an increasing ‘feminisation of poverty’ i.e. that poverty among women is rising faster than poverty among men. I again share some data with you.

*Data from 41 countries which account for 84 per cent of the total rural population 114 developing countries indicate both growing numbers and proportions of women among the rural poor since the mid 1960s Table of the Total number of rural people living below the poverty line by sex (estimated in millions)*

**Table 1**

	<i>1965-70</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>Percentage change</i>
<i>Women</i>	<i>383,673</i>	<i>564000</i>	<i>47.0</i>
<i>Men</i>	<i>288,832</i>	<i>375,481</i>	<i>30.0</i>
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>672,505</i>	<i>939,481</i>	<i>39.7</i>

Source: ILO, 2000<sup>31</sup>

There is also a general perception of an increasing incidence of female headship of households on a global scale and an association of this trend with the ‘feminisation of poverty’<sup>32</sup>

The percentage of households headed by women increased world-wide in the 1980s. In Western Europe, for example, it grew from 24% in 1980 to 31% in 1990. In the developing world, it varies from less than 20% in certain Southern and South-eastern Asian countries to almost 50% in certain African countries and the Caribbean. Recent observations indicate that households headed by women are more likely to be poor than households headed by men

- 70% of the 4.5 billion people living on less than US\$2 per day are women and children.
- Women and girls own less than 1% of the planet's wealth; they furnish 70% of the work hours and receive only 10% of the income.
- A woman’s lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy related causes is 1 in 16 in Africa, while a woman’s risk is 1 in 1400 in Europe (2000).
- In developing countries, nearly 570 million rural women - 60% of the rural population - live below the poverty line

According to UNDP/HDR (1995) poverty has a woman’s face – of 1.3 billions people living in poverty, 70 % are women. It is also asserted that there is a feminisation of poverty occurring, i.e. that poverty among women is rising faster than poverty among men. A study by the International Fund for Agricultural Development<sup>33</sup> found that between 1965-70 and the mid-1980s, the number of rural women living in poverty increased by 48 %, while the number of rural men living in poverty increased by 30 % in the same period.

<sup>31</sup> ILO, 2000 – Gender Poverty and Employment- turning capabilities into entitlement.

<sup>32</sup> Buvinic and Gupta, 1997

<sup>33</sup> Jazairy I. and M. Alamgir, The State of the World Rural Poverty: An Inquiry into its Causes and Consequences. Rome, International Fund for Agricultural Development, 1992.

Why is employment, which was the top of the agenda both internationally and nationally in the 1970s and 80s, not part of the programme for the poor, or analysis of causes, to day? Today a noticeable commonality amongst all the stakeholders, national and international in relation to poverty eradication, is that Rapid Economic Growth is the basic necessity for removal of poverty. It is intriguing and yet not so mysterious to find that employment, job creation is not even one of the Millennium goals, or one of the solutions to poverty conceived by the World Bank or the other agencies. Poverty it is claimed will be removed by growth, growth of the GDP. OR by improving Human development ie investment in education, health, the social inputs. Jobs are not on the agenda. Why? Because most of the production and trade approaches to day, where capital is flying across the world as venture capital, or FDI's, etc is for job less development. Many of us, and here I quote one of India's most eminent scientists, Dr M S Swaminathan, refer to day's growth path as job less growth. The answer to me is obvious. It lies in the nature of the production and trade systems of to day, partly the result of technological and scientific advances in generating goods and services, as also the liberalisation programme where there is dynamic mobility in the flow of capital, and deep constraints and obstructions to the flow of labour and skills. Retrenchment of workers, dismantling of worker organisations and pushing labour out of the spaces of power, has become the order of the day, in order for the economic engines to move. Hence from struggles for more secure employment and better wages; the shift is to social security provisions, pensions for single old women, BIG in South Africa.

Yet when, as in India right now, the State offers free gruel to the weaver displaced from his livelihood from weaving, he refuses it. He says buy my product, I don't want your sop to prevent me from dying. Weavers rather commit suicide than live on doles. Reminding us of the Poor laws in Britain and the revolt against them, interestingly by the suffragettes

"In the Suffragette Movement Sylvia Pankhurst details the grievances of working-class women who participated in her East End delegation to Liberal prime minister, Asquith, in 1914. They wanted an end to low pay and sweated labour, they spoke out against the degradation and humiliation of the hated Poor Law, they were concerned with the plight of unmarried women, prostitutes and the welfare of mothers and babies. They saw the vote as a means of securing economic and social changes which could transform their lives, not just 'sex equality', which was how the demand was posed by the middle-class leadership of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and, later, by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), with its vague demand of 'votes for women'.

### **Women's Employment**

"LPG", - liberalization privatisation globalisation has changed many aspects of the space within which the core issues of employment and equality, with special reference to women were being considered. The concern with issues of employment though have grown and has been voiced in many UN documents and resolutions. For example, "promoting women's education, employment and skills development" and the elimination of "all discriminatory practices, including those in the workplace." were among the three main recommendations made at the **International Conference on Population and Development (1994)**. The theme of women and employment was also covered in the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, also in 1994, which pointed out that equal access to employment opportunities for women was not yet a reality. It went further and said that women had to be brought in fully into the economic decision-making process. With specific reference to globalisation it pointed out that the increasing globalisation and the attendant competition for scarce economic resources has had a negative impact on women and other disadvantaged groups, especially in developing countries, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

“There, as elsewhere the growing unemployment among men, lack of child-care facilities because of budgetary pressures and privatisation, rising social tensions have precipitated a return to traditional attitudes towards the role of women. In the industrialised nations on the other hand, women’s unemployment rates are no worse than men’s except in five European countries where there are a significantly larger number of jobless women.”

This reality was also reflected in the effects of the crisis in the labour market in Latin America and the Caribbean included a slump in the rate of job creation, changes in the type of employment created and a drop in wages. Between 1980 and 1985 ... the number of unemployed rose at a cumulative annual rate of 8 per cent per annum ... the changes in the structure of employment ... reflect an increase in the proportion of jobs characterised by the greatest degree of under utilisation of labour, as manifested in informalisation, tertiarisation and an increase in employment in the public sector ... the rapid expansion of the urban informal sector ... is indicative of a worsening of the employment situation mainly affecting the lowest income sectors of the population<sup>5</sup> ... the share of agricultural population has once again started to grow, as a result of the slump in employment in the cities (ECLAC, 1992: 25-6).

The focus on the issue of employment was propelled by many including *expert committees*. A case in point is the one that the Secretary General convened on development and the role women (1972). The gathering under the auspices of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development was the first such expert meeting on the subject. One of its main recommendations was for introduction of programmes to create jobs, training and vocational guidance. This came at a time when the ILO was moving from a narrower focus on labour to looking at employment creation strategies<sup>34</sup>. It therefore steered away from the traditional concept of vocational training as merely a means to meet market demand to the more dynamic “human resource development” (Convention No.142 1975) and adopted the recommendation of the expert group and to ensure women are included in the programmes and project that flowed out of this Convention and the accompanying Recommendation.

This issue of women’s employment reoccurs many times over, including at the UN World Women’s Conferences. For example at the first one at Mexico in 1975 some minimum targets were set to be met by 1980 in many areas including employment opportunities. At the time of the Second World Women’s Conference at Copenhagen (1980) women’s employment came sharply into focus as one of the three main areas of concern (along with health and education). The broad aims of Mexico it was felt would not be successful unless “refined to specific, highly focused objectives for women.” (GA Resolution A/RES/39/129.14) In the 1980s the focus was on the link between paid and unpaid work and the impact of the latter on equal opportunity. By mid-1980s there was a feeling that despite the efforts of the UN Decade for Women, the campaign had fallen short of achieving significant and sustained progress for many women even in three priority areas of the Decade: employment, health and education.

The Nairobi Conference then drew up the Forward-looking Strategies which provided practical “blueprint for the future of women to the end of the century specific measures in key areas” including employment. The ILO responded by passing the Resolution on Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Employment 1985. It outlined measures that nations and ILO should undertake, which included equal access to employment and training; principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value; and improvement of working conditions especially, provision of adequate maternity protection and benefits. The

---

<sup>34</sup> Emmerji, Jolly, Weiss 2001.

*Resolution on Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women in Employment* was passed in 1985. However as the 1989 World Survey on the on Role of Women in Development, pointed out “for the average woman today – poor, lacking equal opportunities for education, subject to work for a lesser remuneration... development has been an illusion.” The issues of equality and non-discrimination therefore continued to demand attention.

Through the 1970s and the 1980s during the economic crises in Latin America and Africa the ILO took to promoting *Employment-Intensive Work Programmes* like the World Employment Program (WEP) infrastructure development (public works programmes) (R169). The shift of these besides it being more employment-intensive was that it directed at the basic needs of the entire population, including the poor. (Ahead of the Curve) However, these were initially gender-blind and did not take in the specific needs of women. It was seen that beside socio-cultural factors, “the level and mode of payment, the extent and manner of mobilizing self-help (unpaid) labour system of recruiting local labour, conditions of work at the work site and degree of poor women’s involvement in decision-making and planning mechanisms” made a difference. Learning from this experience the latter project of ILO such as the one in north Kordofan province in Sudan or the one in Burkina Faso demonstrated how the range of women’s jobs in these infrastructure programmes can be widened.

UNFPA in its efforts to promote gender equality highlights share of women in wage employment in the non agriculture sector.

The ILO , under the leadership of Juan Somavia has re invoked in 2000 year, the spirit of the 80s when work , was seen as the most dignified solution or offer to remove poverty .

Decent work is described as “In the most dramatic of situations it's about moving from subsistence to existence. And everywhere, and for everybody, decent work is about securing human dignity... It (work) is critical to one's identity and future; it is the principal means by which people connect to their communities and to the wider economic system. Work is also the primary route out of poverty.” ((Address by Juan Somavia, Director-General, International Labour Organization to the Global Dialogue, EXPO 2000 on "Decent work for all" (Hanover, 3 October 2000)

It is important to understand that the decent work approach tackles employment, basic rights, protection and social dialogue simultaneously. They are goals in their own right, but they also reinforce each other. The worldwide recognition that these fundamental principles and rights at work constitute the social floor of the global economy was first expressed in 1995 at the Social Summit in Copenhagen. The same rights are included among the nine principles of the Global Compact.

Crucial among these rights is the right to voice - to organize and be heard, to be able to defend your interests and to bargain collectively. It is important for those who are considering issues related to social sector, such as population linked as it is to health to re-invoke the economic programmes, like employment

How is this related to population?? Even if we take the heart of what is on peoples minds as population, even though there are definitions which say it is people, it is quality of life etc basically policy makers are wanting to know about fertility, the growth of numbers, whose numbers? Numbers growing amongst the poor or amongst the rich? I.e., numbers growing in China, which would worry them as its population is already large, or in a pan where the fertility is less than one and the base population very small?

**What is the connection then between employment and fertility? And to carry it further into women's rights, dignity and finally the crucial factor which determines women's capacity to determine her reproductive choices? Namely gender relations?**

In the 1980s and early 1990s, labour force growth was substantially higher for women than for men for every region of the world except Africa. In the developed industrialized countries, increasing female labour force participation has been linked to the completion of the fertility transition .... It is also seen that the developed countries that experienced the largest increases in female labour force participation rates (FLFPRs) in the 1980s also tended to have the largest declines in total fertility rates (TFRs).

However this relationship does not necessarily hold true across all 'locales' and 'employment styles' labour force participation has not been matched by improvements in job quality and that the kinds of jobs women are engaged in and their working conditions have not led to their true socio-economic empowerment, if adequately satisfying alternatives to childbearing or serious incompatibility between paid and unpaid work, have not been made then the cause-effect does not work.

However what these figures, analysis shows is that

- a. when women are absorbed into the labour force in ways which firmly draws them away from 'stereotypes' especially from perceptions of value that their work is not economically as rewarding as men or in relation to more hands work that changes gender stereotypes and gender relations then the impart on fertility is dramatic
- b. Income-earning an income, decent work, provides the best platform for enabling making of choice – choice of every kind, economic, social, political. It is the basis for human dignity and selfworth and therefore the precondition for asserting Rights.

Women would like to determine their reproductive path -. this is called reproductive choice , and reproductive rights . Field work in India, for example reveals that women prefer to have few children but their lack of the power for self determination, not only the lack of contraceptive services is the major hold back. Where women have claimed power, recast gender relations the number of children has reduced , even when other variables like education, infant mortality, are unchanged

At a conference organized by the United Nations Population Division in New York in mid-March 2002 many international demographers from around the world met to reassess the outlook and possibly lower the estimated increase in population by about a billion people this century

“The decline in birthrates in nations where poverty and illiteracy are still widespread defies almost all conventional wisdom. Planners once argued -- and some still do -- that falling birthrates can only follow improved living standards and more educational opportunities, not outrun them. It now seems that women are not waiting for that day.

A few demographers are venturing to say that the trend may have little to do with government policies on family planning or foreign aid.

Since the United Nations conference on population and development in Cairo in 1994, women in many countries have said that if they had control over their reproductive lives, lower fertility rates would be a given. Women's health organizations now say that is happening.

'Whether they live in villages or high-rises, women have always known what's best for them and their families. Now we're seeing the results of their own choices to have fewer children.' a new phenomena that is emerging worldwide. (Population Estimates Fall as Poor Women Assert Control New York Times; New York, N.Y.; Mar 10, 2002; [Barbara Crossette](#))

In other words the theories that women are like noodle machines, into whom if education, or some other items are pushed in their fertility will go down, is not borne out. Poor women would not need these props to reduce their child bearing, they need the **power to say no**, they need a change in their own self perception, self worth and a change in their power vis a vis the man, the family power structure as well as social perceptions

In India where I have served both on the National Committee in preparation for Cairo and on the expert group on population policy, the Swaminathan committee, and also now convened 3 colloquia at different levels on population policy. We are seized with concerns on the style of development, eg the trend to privatise social amenities, the overall macroeconomic programme of what we in India call LPG. (Liberalisation, globalisation, privatisation), the neglect of employment as a crucial poverty eradicator.

We are concerned that the RCH program, which is claimed to be an improvement on the Family Planning programme, has distracted the policy from what is really needed, i.e. a basic floor for primary health care, joined to a full employment programme where individuals can earn their living and access the social services. Instead the focus again is on the womb of the female from adolescence to woman, and not her bread and her autonomy. The Indian expert group actually recommended the removal of the family welfare department – so that it would be only HEALTH – shifting the focus from “reproduction” – fertility – which has often led to harsh, punitive, policies for “fertility control” usually discriminating against the poor, dalits, and minorities. In India we have taken up the issue of the two family norm being imposed with the National Human Rights Commission.

While the Cairo conference is praised for having moved the debate to women's rights, - from the point of view of the developing countries, it was also hijacked by Issues which are current preoccupations of the wealthier countries, moving away from the traditional demands for greater support for the economic revival of the developing countries, canceling debt, more development transfers, less asymmetrical trading arrangements, more voice in international governance

We also see the importance of institutional arrangements where women can re construct the power relations, - and usually this has been most effective when it is associated with bread winning, the economic activity as then the organisation has the motivation to work collectively across the usual divides as well as political institutions. The Trade associations, the self-help credit groups, the cooperatives are units for women's economic advance<sup>35</sup>.

We see the importance of political power for women, if any social or economic subordination or discrimination is to be budged, and this was the most significant call of the Beijing

---

<sup>35</sup> Marilyn Carr, Martha Chen and Renana Jhabvala.: Speaking Out – Women's Economic Empowerment in South Asia.

conference of 1995. Thus the million women in local self govt as elected representatives are a social force which is knocking at traditional gender relations in politics, in governance<sup>36</sup>.

We also see that Poverty cannot be removed by a cosmetic approach. The very basis of the economic theories and arguments for its removal have to change, and without that larger change, in the macro framework, the opportunity for women to either access equality or reproductive health, or choice is extremely unlikely.

Similarly in fighting for or claiming of rights, single rights cannot be easily or even with difficulty claimed. For the most deprived, those for whom bread on any day is not a certainty, the economic right to bread cannot be accessed without the political right to claim it. For women, whose social rights are embedded in the political framework, one cannot be accessed without the other. Further the individual right - which has been identified as a crucial lever for women who are oppressed by traditional and cultural discriminations, and violence - for poor women, are related to economic rights, such as the right to ownership of assets, the right to access credit on her own, the right to choose a partner etc.

The effective expression of reproductive rights is dependent on a broader acceptance of the language of rights, in a broader set of areas such as mentioned above – the right to natural resources, the right to protest, the right to leadership and to information. Expanding the concept of reproductive health to include the concept of social and economical security for women would bring us directly to notions of development rights to the rights of livelihood, food and so on. Again ground swell movements are adopting this language as it links them to constitutional and judicial mechanisms which seem to have more potential to provide justice than the government or even civic society – apart from the market of course.

One cannot help feeling anxious – as much of what has happened with the environment, with the people living in poverty, with women amongst them was predicted. People of my generation knew that plastics would hurt the ozone layer, that we were creating a brown cloud that will prevent the sun from shining on our lands and people, that cutting of trees would disturb the ecology of mountains and the streams that flow from them, that submerging of land due to large dams would salinate as well as create new havocs and so on. We knew of the sources of alternative energy, water, consumption styles, even alternative economics. We also knew that energy consumption as well as pollution emission is greater in the high-income industrialised spaces in the globe.

For example UNFPA estimated that a child born today in a industrialized country will add more to consumption and pollution over his or her life time than 30 – 50 children born in developing countries. In its report 2001, "Footprints and milestones population and environmental change" The report points to the fact that 2 billion people already lack food security and water supplies and agricultural lands are under increasing pressure while the world population has tripled of the past 70 years, water use has risen six fold during the time. In a world where "350 million women worldwide lack any access to family planning services while over 5000,00 women die each year from complications during pregnancy and childbirth... one in three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise

---

<sup>36</sup> Jain, Devaki: Bradford Morse Memorial Lecture – 'Minds: Not Bodies – Expanding the notion of gender in development' – UNDP-Beijing Sep 5, 1995, Women in Governance – An Illustration from Panchayat Raj -1995. UNDP)

abused in her lifetime... Women earn on an average two-thirds to three-fourths as much as men for the same work. In addition, women perform most of the invisible work-housekeeping, cooking, collecting firewood and water, childcare, gardening –that sustains households from day to day. Most official economic accounting measures do not account for the value of invisible work. If these services were ‘counted’ they would be valued at about one-third of the world’s economic production<sup>37</sup>.

Here then is the face of destitution, “Samri Devi is a 70-year-old widow who lives in Kusumatand, an impoverished hamlet in Palamau district Jharkhand. Her son, Bhageshwar Bhuiya suffers from TB and is unable to work. Her daughter in law has taken leave of this world. So the burden of looking after Bhageshwar and his seven children rests on Samir Devi’s frail shoulders. She feeds the family somehow, by gleaning leftover rice from a local rice mill, collecting wild foods and begging from time to time. The children are severely undernourished and none of them go to school. Except for one cooking pot and a few rags, Samir Devi’s family owns absolutely nothing – not even a blanket or a pair of chappals<sup>38</sup>”

It is this *factor of woman*, as a single nucleus, or the power filled genome, or this “last person” that Gandhi talks about, contains the secret for turning around a downswing to an upswing. Charging this factor, starting from this factor, analysing the disparity, discrimination, exclusion as well as creativity and brilliance of this factor, can have a multiplier effect and reverse the tide of deepening poverty as well as the political and economic culture. The neglect of this factor expresses itself in many areas of academic and policy work- sometimes enabled and sometimes disabled by international initiatives and ideas. In an amazing feat of blindness, the system refuses to “see” and thereby loses this multiplier.

## **Annexures:**

### **The International Conference on Population and Development: 1994**

#### Goals

1. Reduction of maternal mortality ratios (MMR)
2. Universal access by 2015
3. Expansion of skilled delivery services
4. Elimination of unmet need for family planning by 2015.
5. Reduction of vulnerability to HIV/AIDS infection.

### **World Summit for Social Development: (March 1995, Copenhagen)**

Place people at the centre of development and direct our economies to meet human needs more effectively

Recognize that, while social development is a national responsibility, it cannot be successfully achieved without the collective commitment and efforts of the international community.

Integrate economic, cultural and social policies so that they become mutually supportive, and acknowledge the interdependence of public and private spheres of activity;

---

<sup>37</sup> Figures according to report ‘What’s Good for Women is Good for the World.’ by Worldwatch Institution, Washington, Aug. 2002 from article in Deccan Herald “Gender Myopia’ Distorts Policies 20/08/2002.

<sup>38</sup> Dreze, Jean: Ending Destitution , The Hindu Monday July 29, 2002.

Promote democracy, human dignity, social justice and solidarity at the national, regional and international levels; ensure tolerance, non-violence, pluralism and non-discrimination, with full respect for diversity within and among societies;

Promote the equitable distribution of income and greater access to resources through equity and equality of opportunity for all; Promote universal respect for, and observance and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including the right to development; promote the effective exercise of rights and the discharge of responsibilities at all levels of society; promote equality and equity between women and men; protect the rights of children and youth; and promote the strengthening of social integration and civil society; Recognize that empowering people, particularly women, to strengthen their own capacities is a main objective of development and its principal resource. Empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and well-being of our societies; Strengthen policies and programmes that improve, ensure and broaden the participation of women in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life, as equal partners, and improve their access to all resources needed for the full exercise of their fundamental rights

#### **4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995)**

Listed twelve main areas of concern.

An agreed upon five-year action plan to enhance the social, economic and political empowerment of women, improve their health, advance their education and promote their marital and sexual rights emerged from the Conference.

(All the plus 5 were to review how far so no new goals), Beijing plus 5 (June 2000), Social Summit plus five (June 2000 )

#### **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: (Earth Summit) Rio de Janeiro 1992**

Preamble (Chapter 1)

Although the preamble contains no substantive provisions, its language figured in three controversies, Saudi and Kuwaiti delegations had insisted on including the words “safe and” in the phrase “environmentally safe and sound energy systems” to avoid the perception that the document favoured nuclear power. As a compromise, the words were eventually removed from all other sections except the preamble, which states that references to “environmentally sound” energy systems in fact mean “safe and sound”. In another incident, references to “people under occupation” were retained in the Rio Declaration but removed from Agenda 21, though an addition to the preamble states that implementation of Agenda 21 would respect all principles in the declaration. Finally, a reference to “economic in transition” was retained in the preamble but deleted elsewhere.

### **Section 1: Social and Economic Dimensions**

Chapter 2: Accelerating Sustainable Development in Developing Countries. Although largely an uncontroversial discussion of the relationship between international economies, national policies, and sustainable development, the chapter’s text required some negotiation on

whether the contribution to development by the international economic environment or by domestic policies would be emphasized more.

Chapter 3: Combating Poverty. to eradicate poverty and hunger and to manage natural resources sustainably with regard for the people who depend on them for their livelihood.

Chapter 4: Changing Consumption Patterns. In chapter 4, the relationship between present patterns of production and consumption in industrialized countries and sustainable development is discussed diplomatically.

Chapter 5: Demographic Dynamics. An equally tactful discussion of population issues is found in this chapter. A phrase from chapter 5, "demographic dynamics and policies," became UNCED's standard phrase for population.

Chapter 6: Human Health. for intersectorial efforts to link human health to environmental and socioeconomic improvements.

Chapter 7: Sustainable Human Settlements. Chapter 7 contains an uncontroversial discussion of the sustainable development of cities in both the industrialized and developing worlds.

Chapter 8: Integrating Environment and Development in Decision making. The need to integrate environmental factors into policy making, law, economic instruments, and national accounting is discussed in Chapter 8

**Section 2: Conservation and management of Resources for Development (Have details if you want)**

**Section 3: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups**

This section contains chapters 23-32 consists statements on the importance of each of the following nongovernmental sectors in implementing sustainable development: women; children and youths; indigenous peoples; NGOs; local authorities; trade unions; business and industry; science and technology; and farmers.

**Section 4: Means of Implementation**

Chapter 33: Financial Resources and Mechanisms. Negotiations for this chapter were the most difficult of the conference. The three major issues discussed are a target and deadline for an increase in total official development assistance (ODA); the level of replenishment of the concessionary branch of the World Bank, the International Development Agency (IDA); and the governance of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). The question of total ODA was resolved by the statement that industrialized nations "reaffirm" their commitment to the UN target of ODA equal to 0.7 percent of donor gross national product. Thus, no new obligation is imposed on those industrialized countries that never "affirmed" the UN goal. The level of IDA replenishment was not resolved during discussions at UNCED, and additional donor funding for an explicit "Earth increment" to the fund was not instituted. World Bank President Lewis Preston proposed that the next scheduled IDA replenishment should maintain the present level in real terms, which would require funding of about \$17.5 billion over the period 1993 to 1995. He also suggested that the bank allocate an additional \$1.2 billion from its interest income. Furthermore, the UNCED delegations recommended changing the structures of GEF to give developing countries more power.

Chapter 34: Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technology. Disputes over appropriate terms for technology transfers were resolved by the inclusion in this chapter of such statements as enhanced access to technology should be “promoted, facilitated, and financed as appropriate”, and that states should take measures to prevent the abuse of intellectual property rights.

Chapter 35: Science for Sustainable Development

Chapter 36: Education, Public Awareness and Training

Chapter 37: Cooperation for Capacity Building in Developing Countries.

Chapter 38: International Institutional Arrangements. This chapter discusses the establishment of the Sustainable Development Commission, a new UN body under the Economic and Social Council, to coordinate the pursuit of sustainable development among international organizations and to monitor progress by governments and international organizations toward the goals of Agenda 21. Several important organizational questions regarding the commission were deferred to the fall meeting of the UN General Assembly: the authority, reporting structure, location, and membership of the commission; the relationship between participation by representatives of governments and NGOs; the size and resources of the secretariat; and the formality and prominence of national reports to the commission.

Chapter 39: International Legal Instruments and Mechanisms. This chapter is controversial because of its discussion of such issues as the “environmental crimes” provision on deliberate large-scale environmental destruction, environmental standards as trade barriers, compliance with international agreements, and dispute prevention. A dispute arose over whether use of the phrase “environmental crimes” should be confined to times of war or used more generally. Many developing countries argued that general use would infringe on their sovereignty by allowing UN agents to scrutinize domestic environmental practices. The United States also favoured restricting the provision to wartime use because broader use of the term would undermine ongoing UN negotiations on the law of war. Ultimately, the provision was restricted to wartime use. The trade dispute was settled by inclusion of the statement that environmental policies should not result in unnecessary trade restrictions, but if they do, the measure should be non discriminatory and transparent, should restrict trade as little as possible, and should consider the special conditions of developing countries. The issue of compliance and dispute prevention were both settled by the use of weaker language; thus, “effective, full, and prompt implementation” was used instead of compliance, and the phrase “dispute avoidance” was substituted for dispute prevention.

Chapter 40: Information for Decision Making. The final chapter discusses the importance of collecting and using information for sustainable development and for implementing Agenda 21.

Cairo plus Five (Rio plus five June 1997)

### **The Children’s summit 1990**

Major Goals for Child Survival, Development and Protection

Supporting/sectoral Goals -Women's health and education

Nutrition

Child health

Water and sanitation

Basic education  
Children in difficult circumstances

## The Millenium Summit Declaration

- I Values and principles
- II. Peace, security and disarmament
- III. Development and poverty eradication
- IV. Protecting our common environment
- V. Human rights, democracy and good governance
- VI. Protecting the vulnerable
- VII. Meeting the special needs of Africa
- VIII. Strengthening the United Nations

### ¶ Millenium goals

1. Poverty Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Education Achieve universal primary education
3. Gender Equality Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Child Mortality Reduce child mortality
5. Maternal Health Improve maternal health
6. HIV/AIDS and other disease Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Environment Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Global Partnership Develop a global partnership for development

Adult Economic Activity Rate (Percentage) The World's Women 1995 United Nations.

	1970		1980		1990	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
<b>Developing Regions</b>						
Northern Africa	8	82	12	79	21	75
Sub-sah Africa	57	90	54	89	53	83
Latin America	22	85	25	82	34	84
Caribbean	38	81	42	77	49	72
E. Asia	57	86	58	83	56	80
S.E.Asia	49	87	51	85	54	81
S.Asia	25	88	24	85	44	78
C Asia	55	76	56	77	58	79
W.Asia	22	83	26	81	30	77
Oceania	47	88	46	86	48	76
<b>Developed Regions</b>						
E.Europe	56	79	56	77	58	74
W Europe	37	78	42	75	51	72
Other developed Countries	40	81	46	78	54	75

### Regional Variation

- Within the OECD, the average annual growth rate for economically active women was 2.1%, more than twice the rate for men which was 0.8%. (from 1983 to 1992 ILO Reports)
- In the United States, Canada and the Scandinavian countries, women now make up nearly half the active population, with activity rates of over 70% in the core age groups.
- In Central and Eastern Europe, despite the recession and reforms undertaken as part of the transition to a market economy, women's participation in active working life has not fallen faster than that of men. Data from the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Belarus indicate that the share of women in salaried employment has not declined since the beginning of the 1990s.
- In Southeast Asia, women represent up to 80% of the labour force in export processing zones. In China, the labour force participation rates for women of the 15 to 64 age group have remained high over the last two decades, at around 70%.
- In developing countries, the ILO in 1994 put a provisional estimate of 44% of the economically active population being women. It also estimates that the Latin American region has the low rates of female participation - about 30%. This though is changing quickly. The lowest levels of female participation are recorded in the Arab

countries. (Women and the World of Work: The Social Costs of Progress ILO 1996-2001 [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org))