

## **Development with Women**

*Edited and Introduced by Doriennne Rowan-Campbell and Deborah Eade*

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### **Introductory Essay**

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I would like to feel that when history counts the votes as to which of the 'isms' has had the most impact on twentieth century lives, feminism will be judged as the most important human movement. By feminism I mean that women's movement which speaks to the most profound yet basic of changes in the roles, the rights, and the relations which govern connections, commerce, and intimacy between women and men. This movement offers a vision of equality in society, equity in partnership, and freedom from gender stereotyping - freeing each person to pursue the roles best suited to their needs and talents. The movement has been dynamic because the struggle for change takes place not on the world's battlefields but at home and in the most intimate space, the human heart. Feminism has had the potential to touch every man, woman, and child because its basic tenets remain relevant whatever the conditions under which people live, regardless of the dictates of totalitarianism, globalism, communism, or capitalism, or whether they suffer racism, ageism, or sexism.

In the middle of this century the women's movement, largely quiescent in public consciousness since the Suffragettes, staged a comeback. In true twentieth-century style, feminism - North American and European feminism - became a media event. While coverage tended to emphasise radicalism, describing women as 'libbers' and thus perhaps alienating many women and men, there was an unprecedented exposure and level of public debate of feminist issues and concerns. This debate moved the matter of women's equality beyond domestic boundaries to the global stage; again at a remarkable level, inspiring the First World Conference for Women held in Mexico 1974. After four UN World Conferences and one year devoted to women, the world seems to agree that women should have equality and equity and that gender issues are of some importance.

Why, then, are these changes that the world appears to agree are necessary so slow in coming? Why, all around the globe, are women still working longer hours and earning less than men? Why haven't laws which allow discrimination against women been changed and their implementation ensured? Why are so many women still illiterate? Why are so many women still chattels of their spouse and his family? Why is violence against women and children, particularly young girls, so prevalent? The third millennium approaches, yet practitioners still struggle to bring to development work a consciousness of gender issues that will change lives - and hearts - and bring about a world where women and men equally determine how to enhance their own lives and their communities and societies.

Sadly, history is likely to judge that although feminism had the potential for tremendous reach, its scope was never fully realised in the twentieth century. Perhaps we are still too close to judge accurately either our shortcomings or our successes. This essay reflects on the segregation and isolation which confront those who seek to breach the ramparts of male hegemony and bring down the walls of gender inequality. It examines the strategies of the women's movement as applied to development work with women (primarily gender training and mainstreaming) and assesses the barriers to change which have been erected to counter its challenge to patriarchy. It also looks forward to some of the areas of positive change, and to the urgent need to anchor these early in the next millennium.

Male hegemony corrupts development initiatives which are designed to make a positive difference in women's lives and, by extension, the lives of their families and their men. This is especially visible in the way development has been directed towards and channelled through women, particularly with the concept of income generation, in the handling of violence against women and domestic violence, and in the question of participatory approaches for sustainable development. Particularly disheartening is the manner in which men tend to avoid attending to or participating in discussion of issues that relate primarily to the concerns of women. Development with women has therefore largely been development for women by women with women; and therein lies some of the seeds of its under-achievement.

The Adinkra symbol Sankofa, a stylised bird moving forward yet ever looking backward, reminds us that it is impossible to understand the present without being aware of and understanding the past. To understand the present situation let us glance over our shoulders at the end of the seventeenth century in Europe, when the structures of male dominance begin to be institutionalised and gender discrimination codified. We then need to consider the emergence of the international development enterprise and, lastly, the role and impact of global corporations.

### **Sankofa**

'Nature', wrote Dr Samuel Johnson, 'has given women so much power that the law has very wisely given them little'. His aphorism might be said to sum up the thinking of his age.

[D]uring the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries western society began to find solutions to the problems of organisation brought by the changes that occurred in technology, agriculture, industry, commerce.... Discrimination against women as opposed to prejudice against women and injustice dealt women by particular legal practices became part of the new structures that emerged, and as these new structures emerged and as they affected the lives of more and more people in more and more ways, so discrimination against women became more and more widespread, more and more accepted and more and more difficult to combat... The late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century see the construction of a particular culture through western society, and this results in new and particularly damaging levels of discrimination against women. (Griffiths 1976:99)

Gender discrimination thus became codified and accepted as justified. Women slowly became minors too incompetent to manage their own finances; they lost their medieval rights to work as *femmes soles* (Clark 1968). This happened at a point in history which was to have a dramatic impact on the countries now called 'developing'.

The seventeenth and eighteenth century European societies began the transformation from agrarian to industrialised economies, which changed the nature of work. It became a separate activity, moved from the home into a defined 'workplace'. As this occurred, the familial relationships which had hitherto existed between apprentice, journeyman, and master or mistress and servant, began to erode. A distinction began to be drawn between domestic and economic functions (Griffiths 1976), and more and more the male shouldered the economic functions, while the female remained to deal with the domestic. These values, attitudes, and institutions were transferred to other societies through the colonisation process, which lasted into the twentieth century. All colonial powers took with them and applied to their colonial holdings that western model of organisation which overtly discriminated against women.

Examples abound of the collision and collusion between the existing gender prejudices and discrimination and those imposed by the colonial powers. Barbara Rogers (1980) has noted how the colonial structures deprived women in Africa of their usufructural rights, in much the same way as the Enclosure Acts in Europe deprived the peasantry of access to village commons. This separated women from access to and control over their means of production.

A more basic separation also occurred: the isolation of groups of women from that greater 'community' of women. Colonial structures used class and race to separate women from each other. By placing strictures on association across race and class lines, colonial rule enforced distances between mistress and servant, between merchant's wife and soldier's wife, between locals and expatriates. Women who shared a common condition and experience could not join together to explore the possibility of fighting for change. Further, under the guise of being protected by men, women in fact were used to maintain male hegemony. And maintain it they did: not only by failing to challenge inequality or sustaining male privilege through their supportive reproductive role, but also by making colonialism economically viable. Catherine Hall documents the vast sums of money invested in colonial ventures which men gained access to through middle-class marriage as a wife's property became the property of the husband upon marriage, to do with as he wished (Hall 1996).

Developing countries internalised colonial norms of sex discrimination and for the most part situated them as the proper order of things as they became independent of the coloniser. Layered above this remained whatever local traditional forms of prejudice had already existed. Traditional expressions of female power and authority had already virtually vanished.

The next wave of support for male domination came in the form of the 'missionaries'. Both the religious and the development missionaries carried with them clear ideas about the role and status of women and, consciously or not, applied these tenets in their work. International development emerged as a discipline and industry of its own, and many caring, well-meaning, and committed workers nonetheless conveyed their version of what it was appropriate for women to do, and a vision of what 'developed' women should be like, without any reference to the women themselves and their local situation.

Directions in development thinking and practice are branded as much by personalities and prejudices as by concepts and ideals. USAID, in analysing their staff complement over time, discovered that the early aid workers were overwhelmingly from the southern US states. It emerged that development work, although not highly paid, was attractive to southerners who earned less than their counterparts in the north. Analysis also revealed that most of these southerners were male, white, and had less education and experience than those recruited from the northern states.<sup>(1)</sup> One might question their impact on how development was delivered. Given that they had been brought up in a society that openly articulated disparaging views on the relationship between race, sex, and intellectual capacity, how effectively were they able to interact with people from the 'developing' world? What were their expectations of the potential of non-white races and of women to benefit from development opportunities? It is clear that the 'who' of development - the people and personalities involved - is as important as the work carried out, and just as critical as the 'why' - the principles that guide it.

Both women and men, even those who volunteered to work in far-off countries in order to share their fortune of birth and education, still carried with them embedded prejudices about

the role and place of women. In the early days of voluntarism through CUSO (Canadian University Service Overseas), VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas, part of the British government's volunteer programme), and the US Peace Corps, there is no indication that the issue of non-discriminatory development with women was discussed even in preliminary briefing and orientation. Volunteers carried the meaning if not the overt message of discrimination; most failed to challenge existing bias and stereotypes.

Although many attempts at change are being introduced, most development organisations, even NGOs, are still rather patriarchal structures. The scale of hierarchical intensity increases from NGO through bilateral to multilateral agencies, rising to an apex in the World Bank and the IMF. Correspondence from the World Bank's external gender consultative group reveals the slow rate of response to issues raised by them; the IMF appears to be entirely silent on gender issues:

Men are aware, although they may not think about this consciously, that everything lies in appearance, and so will fight for appearances and forget or ignore realities. ... This situation is endemic in all patriarchal institutions. (French 1985: 305)

Development organisations have become adept at dealing with women in development and gender issues. In this Reader, Sara Longwe shares with us the insights gained from her repeated visits to Snowdida about the blocking strategies employed to prevent gender policies or actions which might facilitate women's empowerment. The current set of strategies is borrowed from the management ethos of global corporations: true to a concern for appearance, these involve maximising political correctness, going through the right motions, the right pronouncements, and then returning to 'business as usual' in the certainty that little will dislocate corporate reality.

Gender and diversity training and the management of change are a growth industry with consultants invited to perform in many major companies as well as in development agencies. The failure of diversity training to change, for example, the racist and sexist reward structure exposed in a legal suit brought by employees of Texaco Corporation in the USA – a company with apparently open and affirmative recruitment and promotion policies - raises questions as to whether such training was really ever intended to change attitudes.

An examination of the way in which gender training is applied in development organisations would raise similar questions. There are always some staff who are committed, interested and who want to see change. Many attend because cognisance of gender issues is said to be a required work skill to be employed routinely. Development agencies and the UN have made a large investment in training. Most organisations, however - and there are exceptions - fail to follow up the training by developing structures which require accountability on gender issues. There are few penalties for failing to undertake a gender impact assessment, for failing to identify gender issues in log-frame analysis, or for failing, during the planning process, to include indicators through which action on relevant gender issues might be evaluated. In this regard, the attitude of the development sector differs little from that of major corporations.

A 1990 poll of chief executive officers (CEOs) from Fortune 1000 companies revealed that '80 per cent acknowledged that sex discrimination impedes female employees progress but less than 1 per cent regarded remedying sex discrimination as a goal their personnel department should pursue' (Faludi 1991:xiii). Many of these companies are multinationals which export these same attitudes and the values that underpin them in influencing business,

government, and the labour force in the developing countries where they operate. Many multinationals operate in free trade or protected zones where work billed as opportunities for women, who represent the majority of their employees, oppresses them in conditions as much to be deplored as those in the early days of Europe's industrial revolution. The women have little option but to take the work offered on the terms offered. With the economic downturn in Asia, young women and job-seeking immigrants face a different challenge, a labour market 'fast degenerating into a sea of lawlessness and corruption. Inhumane sweatshops, people-smuggling scams, forced prostitution and indentured servitude are fast becoming the new emblems of Asia's hard times'. (*Newsweek* 1998)

There have recently been exposés in the USA of large multinational garment producers who exploit the US immigrant population in factories which equal the appalling work conditions hitherto prevalent in developing countries. These corporations thus continue their exploitation of unskilled and semi-skilled female labour. They do so without a concern for developing promotion and career opportunities for capable women, all the while maintaining a veneer of solicitude for those affected by sex and gender discrimination. The values espoused by these global corporations set a standard - a minimum standard - for attention to gender concerns by appearing to act on the management of change as if gender issues mattered, while in fact doing little to affect the status quo. Their political correctness seems to have inspired many followers in the development world: corporate image is becoming more important than corporate reality.

### **Effects in the field**

#### *Participatory methods*

Male resistance and continued male hegemony affect the way that practitioners who work with women can implement development options. A body of learning and literature on participatory methods has evolved from the experience of working with women's groups, of rotating leadership responsibilities, of sharing skills, information and knowledge, and of cooperative activities.

Female work and management styles are often characterised as being highly participatory, complementary, and cooperative, styles until quite recently discounted in the management literature. In fact, men are generally not encouraged to adopt participatory approaches to work, management, or relationships. What patriarchal institutions tolerate, expect, and reward is 'different forms of obedience' – such as conformity and uniformity - all inspired and maintained by fear (French 1985:308-315). It should therefore not be surprising that while participatory development is widely accepted as a concept, it exists only minimally in development practice, both in fieldwork and in the institutional arrangements of development agencies. A few organisations such as Proshika in Bangladesh strive to make their programmes highly participatory and gender-balanced but for most, participation seems to be viewed as the 'soft side' of development which takes too much time to initiate relative to the outcomes. When agencies do take this path there are often problems. All too often the methodology 'silences spontaneous demands and elicits, at least, a re-packaging within the vocabulary of participation' (Jackson, in Eade 1997).

The UN family appeared to place a high value on NGO collaboration and participation in the debates and international conferences of the 1990s. Yet recently, the very NGOs which had contributed so effectively at UNCED in Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen, and Beijing, and created such a close partnership with the UN agencies, found themselves exiled from any real participation at the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development

(‘Cairo Plus Five’) at the UN General Assembly. Further, a number of countries, including the Vatican, sought to renegotiate the gender-aware language and empowering statements on reproductive rights that represented a break-through for the women’s movement when they were agreed in Cairo. With Copenhagen and the ‘Beijing Plus Five’ assessment meetings scheduled for the year 2000, NGOs are noticeably concerned at this *volte face*.(2)

If participation is associated with female ways of operating, is it perhaps this element of the feminine that agencies find so difficult to accommodate? True participation, after all, involves the development agent voluntarily giving up power over design, direction, and priorities and sharing accountability for project outcomes or, in the case of the UN, for conference outcomes and directions.

A further impediment to the wider introduction of participatory development approaches lies in the current operational structures of multi- and bilateral development agencies. More and more agencies are hiring consultants to do the work of development thinking and implementation for them. Agency staff now function as development managers; costing, accountability, and results are the bottom line. Although they espouse the language of participation, these managers often find participatory development very difficult to deal with. The executing agencies and the consultants link directly with the field, but the agency managers operate from a distance, their development experience mediated by the consultants. If a project is truly participatory, the agency manager responsible for it loses even more control, because decisions and activities are now legitimately field-driven and the outcomes, management structures, and timing that had been conceived of for the project might all be overturned by a people-based plan.

#### *Income generation*

While development strategies have sought to bolster women’s economic opportunities they have long addressed the question in a unique way. The answer, it appeared, lay in income generation. Income generation is the feminised diminutive of employment in much the same way as occupations are named to diminish the role women play when they perform them: there are shepherds and shepherdesses, stewards and stewardesses; men are chefs, but women are cooks.

The thinking behind income generation indicates that project planners situate women in their domestic setting and identify earnings as allied to this role. While this might have been an appropriate entry strategy to counteract male resistance to women’s self-actualisation through independent earnings, women never seem to graduate from these programmes. Still on offer from the 1950s to the end of the century are kitchen gardens, sewing, embroidery, chicken rearing ... it is rather like developing an educational programme which for ever traps adults in kindergarten. Even where new avenues for earning are identified, such as the owning and running of restaurants in Bangladesh (see Mahmuda Rahman Khan’s essay in this Reader), the close association with women’s traditional, accepted household roles feeds the stereotype of what women can and should do, and as such may be limiting. These projects must be as much about finding sustainable solutions to employment as they are about women’s empowerment, and about changing society’s acceptance of a narrow set of roles for women. In their current form, income-generation projects may restrict women by giving them very limited access to economic opportunities, few possibilities for growth, and little choice. It is perhaps not unexpected that there are many reports, repeated across cultures, of instances where income generation is taken over by men once it does become real economic activity. The money and ideas are stolen, and the women left to limp along as before.

## *Violence*

One of the concerns that unites women all over the world is violence. Women have lived with male violence against them for centuries and turned it in on themselves, blaming themselves for its occurrence, wounded and ashamed. Raising the issue in public debate was seen as so politically charged that the first two World Conferences for Women dealt with the issue under the heading 'Peace': peace in the home. This allowed for rhetoric but not for real change. Over the years the accumulation of research and the testimony of an ever-increasing number of support groups, crisis centres, and shelters have made the personal public, and laid the shameful open. Yet this does not appear to have caused the problem to diminish. Whether the new openness means that more violent crimes against women are reported, or whether there is an actual increase, the extent of the violence is numbing. Early strategies that suggested that women's autonomy would lead to a decrease in violence against women are called into question. Policies of 'zero tolerance', which do exist in some countries, have supported women, and have led to men being jailed, but have not yet brought about a change in society's tolerance of this abuse.

Violence against women is a critical tool in the maintenance of male hegemony; it is the means by which the patriarchal requirements of conformity and obedience are extended to women and enforced. In hierarchies, men may obey through fear of losing jobs, status, or power; women are made to fear violence. As violence is inextricably linked with male hegemony, only ending that hegemony is going to reduce violence and persuade citizens that it is an issue for societal concern rather than an isolated private problem. It is also crucial to reduce women's complicity in the violence against them, by rejecting the socialisation which allows women to pretend that to be beaten is to be cared about, and the asymmetrical relations of power which require the bartering of self for money and protection. Most important, change will never happen without the partnership of men.

Re-examining approaches to participation, income generation, and reducing violence against women may hold a key to rethinking how to make development with women more productive, inclusive, and effective in the twenty-first century. These issues do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of the mix of approaches that practitioners have adopted in the past 50 years, and should be seen in the context of two of the most important strategies employed to enhance development with women: gender mainstreaming and gender training.

### **Mainstreaming and gender training**

Mainstreaming refers to the systematic application of a gender-aware vision to corporate activities, government and agency policies, and to the introduction of routine management procedures to ensure implementation. Mainstreaming arose in response to the isolationist strategies which marginalised those responsible for women's concerns in government and agencies, compromising their capacity and reducing their reach. Mainstreaming poses a challenge to the operation of patriarchy, its intent being that women's perspectives, knowledge, capacity, and difference become part of the mainstream of development options and national life, thus changing both.

Analyses of gender mainstreaming in governments identify a number of barriers. Prime among them is a lack of understanding by policy makers of the strategy itself and of the role of focal units on gender issues. In the Caribbean in the early 1980s, the permanent secretaries responsible for women's focal units admitted that they did not have a very clear idea of their role, mission, capacity, or how they could be managed and supported. In preparation for

Beijing 15 years later, the same questions were asked, and senior policy makers *still* did not understand the role of focal units or appreciate the need for mainstreaming. Zero progress?

Although mainstreaming is discussed in all development organisations, not enough effort has been made to ensure responsibility and accountability at several levels. Best practice suggests that a variety of change agents at numerous levels and with different roles both inside and outside the organisation are needed to anchor changes. Change agents at the executive level are critical to the introduction of change, but so too are those at the operational level who maintain the changes on a daily basis, giving life and expression to policy. Equally important are the outsiders, the consultants who work with the organisation bringing expertise and external validation to corporate efforts. In the case of change strategies such as gender mainstreaming, the media, researchers, writers, and the academic community, all keep the issues alive. Without this interaction between internal and external agents, and without a critical mass of staff who maintain change within the organisation, it is difficult for change to take root (Kantor 1983). Experience also shows that gender mainstreaming quickly becomes merely an activity, and one that is repetitive. An effort to mainstream is made, situations and personalities change, there is a hiatus, and the whole process begins again. Many of the organisations begin an attempt at mainstreaming with commitment from senior levels, and with the establishment of a small focal unit with responsibility for initiating the process. Little structure is put in place. Often the individuals designated as links to the units with responsibility are given this task in addition to whatever else they do, and most usually, they are women. Then directions change and gender issues become a second- or third-rank priority, and the focal unit is exposed as too weak to challenge this reduced commitment. Because the issues have belonged to a small group of people and mainstreaming efforts have never been entrenched in the system, it is all too easy to derail gender initiatives or to cause them to under-perform. The system also reinforces the minimalist approach to gender mainstreaming by paying most of its gender consultants less than those who work in other fields.

Within the UN agencies, a new pattern has been emerging: that of rotating leadership on gender issues. Various agencies have taken the lead, then slipped back only to be succeeded by another. In this way, the system can always point to what is being done somewhere - preferably somewhere else. In the early 1990s, UNICEF took a lead with a strongly articulated policy and clear guidelines for action from its Board. A programme to support this was developed and gained fairly wide acceptance. Within three years, however, priorities shifted as leadership changed and gender issues were no longer on the front burner. UNDP has now taken up the mantle of leadership. It has strong policy mandates, financial allocation strategies to ensure mainstreaming, additional staff, and has issued statements about accountability and the need for closely monitoring the initiative.

One of the flaws of a mainstreaming strategy as it is currently employed is its almost exclusive focus on the structures of power and on changing institutions. What is left out is any attempt to influence the ideology of the organisation and consistently challenge the ideology of patriarchy. It is the converse of the feminist movement which mainly challenged patriarchal ideology, rather than its structure. A more synergistic link between mainstreaming and gender training would deliver an emphasis on both structural change and change in attitudes and ideology.

Gender training is the most powerful tool in the storehouse of change activities. It is only through training and sensitising both women and men that the personal can be made the

political. But the training often has not gone as far as is required to truly anchor change, and it has not been used as effectively as it might be to address ideology. Too often, it is weighted towards achieving competence rather than commitment.

Further, although the lessons on best practice exist, practitioners still have difficulty in ensuring that gender training is tailored to current realities in each society, community, and situation. Every society has gender concerns which are immediate and important; the task is to identify them and to incorporate them into the syllabus design. The inability to apply lessons learned as widely as might be desired relates to who controls the organisations and the resources. Patriarchy is not likely to invest extensively in a medium directed at its own demise. Hence, much of the really creative and effective gender training is funded by small organisations which are less concerned about maintaining male hegemony. Many of them are in fact women's development organisations.

In the long term, gender training must move beyond sensitisation and awareness - not only towards developing competence and skills in recognising and dealing with gender issues in the workplace, but also towards transferring these skills to the personal level. The heart has been difficult to reach. Let me give an example. A high-level seminar on male gender roles in the family was going smoothly with little disagreement. A segment which dealt with television and its impact on children and on gender socialisation used an exercise in which all participants watched a music video. The men were asked to express their gut reactions to the video, and the women were asked to predict what the men would feel and say. When the groups' views were compared, there was anger. The men felt that the women demeaned them by making assumptions about what men think and react to; the women suspected that the men were being dishonest about their reactions and only expressing what they thought would be acceptable. The session ran an hour and a half over time, but offered both men and women an opportunity to express concerns, attitudes, and assumptions which they had not aired in the other sessions, moving the seminar a little way beyond political correctness.

The challenge for practitioners is to find creative and effective ways of revealing the attitudes held by both women and men and to create a safe arena for both expressing and addressing them. Most gender training in development organisations is actively discouraged from venturing into this field, the argument being that staff will be uncomfortable and that they really need skills and knowledge, not basic attitudinal change. If attitudes are to change, however, organisations need to open their doors to challenging and perhaps uncomfortable forms of gender training and sensitisation.

While making people aware of how gender affects their lives, their development programmes, the outcomes of their activities, is indeed important, the message and the medium often become confused. Too many programmes designated as gender training are almost entirely women-focused and do not reach male participants. A training colleague once confided that she had had a difficult time in Western Samoa where she was undertaking a gender training programme. She had looked at the situation of women and their inequality, which the men present did not receive well. At the time, Western Samoa had an extremely high incidence of young male suicide, largely attributed to changes in society in which young men no longer won their spurs through deeds of valour and found no satisfying alternative for self-realisation. By contrast, women had clear social roles which were less affected by changing lifestyles. In addition, women in the village were responsible for a clean environment, for pure water, and thus attracted the attention of the development agencies and became involved in small projects. An opportunity was missed. If the issue of male suicide had been part of the

training programme, perhaps the males might have paid more attention.

Gender training and mainstreaming need to be linked in a more holistic way so that gender training is seen as capacity-building in its widest sense. It is not merely a short mandatory course; indeed, it becomes the primary tool for achieving mainstreaming, in the sense of an organisation's capacity to understand, analyse, and implement conditions that create a gender-friendly workplace - in itself a dismantling of male hegemony. Gender analysis and gender training should be addressing basic organisational and personal change. Gender training needs to become more process- and experience-oriented without losing the skill-based elements so necessary for project development and management. Mainstreaming should lead to a total change in workplace values, so that decisions are more widely shared, childcare and parent leave are important, families and relationships count, and respect for a diversity of voices and views is enshrined.

### *Subversive strategies*

Perhaps the millennium is the moment to begin actively to subvert some of the strategies used against women's empowerment and to turn these in on themselves.

In the 1970s and beyond, many development agencies had an avoidance strategy for women and development issues. They hid behind excuses such as 'development deals with people, not with men or women' or 'we only look at people'. It is unlikely that there has been a gender training programme held where someone did not ask, 'what about development for men?' These concerns must be creatively acted upon.

Gender analysis has allowed us to examine the gendered realities of 'the people'. However, we need to revisit those statements and make certain that we are indeed looking at the human dimension, at the men and women behind the gender issues. Gender analysis lets us separate men and women in order to understand their concerns, but we must do more to reintegrate the two, in order to act positively on what we have understood. Despite the many men who now work on gender issues and the many mixed training teams, all too often the issues which affect women most specifically get picked out and dealt with; but men's roles, the asymmetry in power relations, and the patriarchy trap for men are little attended to. If this does not change, gender training will continue to argue the case for women and fail to engage men as partners, as change agents, and as converts. In practice, development with women will remain development without men, and it will be less effective because of it - a conundrum, as it is male hegemony which unpicks the gains made by women and challenges incursions into male privilege.

Why not begin to work with men's groups? Women found that working together as women, at least for a time, strengthened their capacity to understand and articulate their situation. Men need to be able to do the same. Establishing men's groups does not mean following the 'my mother failed me' school of male sensitivity or the construction of the male mystique, but a genuine search at the roots of male gender socialisation and a concern for liberation from patriarchy.

But first there is the question of establishing trust. The experience of the women's movement throughout the centuries and specifically in the past 30 years, demonstrates that the time of greatest danger to making gains is not when women have achieved full equality but when the possibility increases that they might do so (Faludi 1991). The past 15 years have demonstrated that men have been very wary of the changes made in women's lives in the

1960s, 1970s, and 1980s and that many of them have felt very angry about what they perceive as the usurpation of male privilege. Some gains must also have been made in the world of development with women, for there has also been a backlash in this arena. There are fewer funds available for gender issues and development with women; the preparations for the Fourth World Conference showed up a struggle to achieve consensus on aspects of the Beijing Platform for Action on language which had already been agreed in Nairobi in 1985, and a pulling back on issues such as reproductive rights and the language agreed in Cairo in 1994. The backlash is in part responsible for what UNICEF calls the gender 'fade-away', where policy statements and objectives include gender empowerment statements, but project activities contain little to challenge male dominance and facilitate women's empowerment. Women, despite making personal commitments to trust individual men, are distrustful of males in general, and are particularly concerned that partnership should not mean taking over.

In development practice, the most fertile area for building bridges of understanding between men and women is also the most difficult. Poor women and men share common, but distinct, problems as they attempt to claim their entitlements. (3) Women, for example, have difficulty claiming even direct entitlements such as control over their own body or gaining prestige and respect. Nonetheless, patriarchy severely disenfranchises poor men. It is only the illusion that male hegemony endows all males with power which successfully prevents many men from acknowledging the truth of their powerlessness.

The majority of the world's citizens are trapped in the morass of poverty. But the morass provides fertile ground for change. Robert Chambers (1983) identifies the resistance to change displayed by elites which destroys projects fighting poverty and programmes aiming at empowerment. Replace 'elites' with 'patriarchy' and the analysis fits the reality of both women and poor men. Despite the fact that the poor have so little, they are often unable to take chances on change strategies and/or invest in opportunities which might change their condition. Development interventions should focus more on fostering an understanding of common oppression and, informed by this awareness, shaping mutually beneficial approaches, activities, and interventions. These will continue to break down gendered prejudices and will eventually form the basis of healthier relationships between women and men. These approaches will have to be highly participatory, and concentrate on developing practical examples of the uses of power which focus on using 'power *to*' (where you situate yourself relative to other people, to issues, and to solutions), rather than 'power *over*' (where *you* situate other people). Building alliances between women and men has added benefits: elites have hitherto been able to isolate poor women from poor men, and to invalidate empowering activities in this way.

The above is not to suggest that men and women and poor women and men have never worked together. They have and they do. Unfortunately, in most cases their joining forces has been predicated upon the requirement that women put aside relational issues of relation, issues of gender inequality, 'until the battle against racism, for independence, for the revolution is won'. When the desired situation is achieved, men remained the power brokers, and women's role in the struggle and gender equality is forgotten. Movements that have been led by women, such as the Chipko movement, have been more inclusive.

Building trust means making space for men to work as partners, and making space is as difficult for women as it is for men. When the feminist movement challenged men to share in domestic chores and childcare, many women who did begin to share those areas of responsibility found that they had to school themselves to relinquish their 'space'. They found

it uncomfortable; humans find it difficult to unlearn the habits of centuries. Part of the challenge about letting men in lies in how to find the men who want to hear the message - and then giving up space to them to create a place where the togetherness can happen.

Many nodes of change already exist where there are men and women with an extraordinary commitment to break down gender barriers. In the Caribbean, the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies has been working in partnership with men to understand their gendered reality. A particular issue has been the high drop-out rate of young males from the education process, and a number of men's groups work with them. In India, *Sumedhas*, The Academy for the Human Context, runs fellowship programmes directed at human resource practitioners in industry and development. These examine the self within the family, in work organisations, and wider society. The group has a strong commitment to breaking down the areas of silence between women and men and building understanding and friendship between them.

The issue of domestic violence is a real point of entry for working with men. Traumatic events can become cathartic and stimulate action. On 6 December 1989, a man shot and killed 14 women engineering students, because they were 'a bunch of feminists'. This horrific crime galvanised men all over Canada to act against violence. Their continuing commitment to changing society has developed into a wide network bound together by the White Ribbon Campaign. The anniversary of the massacre is Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Countries in the North and South are developing their own White Ribbon campaigns, and there are also US chapters. White Ribbon seeks to build awareness among men of the issues of violence in the society and of the need for them to make conscious commitments to stamp this out. Some groups have been working in support of feminists by trying to overcome male resistance to feminist messages. Several of the groups have developed anti-violence sensitisation programmes, particularly targeting young men. These groups support the work of women's crisis and counselling centres and shelters. In the words of one of them:

All this leads into the very rich territory of supporting men to deal with the pain and power in their lives (the personal and the political). Our work is to invite men to explore the middle path of the healthy and assertive expression of feelings and the healthy choices that can go along with that. My philosophy on men and accountability works on the belief that all men, myself included, have three choices: 1) be violent, sexist and abuse power and control; 2) remain silent while it happens around us; or 3) speak out, connect with other men and work as allies with women for positive change and social justice.(4)

All over the globe there are men who, witnessing violence against women they care about, become activists for change (the websites of some of these organisations are listed in endnote 4).

One of the problems development fieldworkers face in confronting violence against women is their need to validate their own presence in the community, and their fear that to intervene would compromise the effectiveness of their work. These same workers, however, try to change a number of other practices and attitudes that are equally sensitive. In Bangladesh, for instance, BRAC decided to challenge the practice of dowry. All fieldworkers knew that this was part of their role, they knew the issues and the arguments. Interestingly, few organisations take such a determined approach to wife-beating.

Although organisations may say that violence against women is an important issue for them, their lack of concrete interventions suggests to the people they serve that in fact they condone it. Development workers need skills to introduce interventions which are necessary, appropriate, and safe; interventions which do not assign blame but open up issues for discussion. Training is needed to upgrade negotiation and processing skills, and development workers need examples of how to intervene without demeaning the abuser and making the situation even more difficult for the woman. North-South and South-South linkages with the men who work on this issue would help to build this capacity in the field.

Male hegemony can only be dismantled and eroded by working with men; it has to implode from within. Women can not do it alone. Perhaps the most important act of subversion, the most important aspect of turning the inside out, is the issue of power. Instead of being concerned with the literature that bemoans women's fear of power and competition, women need to reclaim the types of power with which they *are* comfortable.

*'Nature has made women so powerful'* ... What power is this? It is a positive, rather than a negative use of power. Power *to* rather than power *over*; power to create, power to nurture, to share, to change a world. The power *to* can undermine power *over* if enough people are committed to making that change. Mahatma Gandhi taught the effectiveness of the use of non-violence. Choosing not to confront, not to abuse, not to fight back is one means of using power *to*. Sharing this power with enough men will begin to disrupt male hegemony.

What is at issue is not an abstract measure of the words 'equality' or 'equity', but the construction of a climate of mutual respect and value between women and men. Essentially, what the feminist movement has been trying to achieve is not a label of equality stamped onto every man and woman, but individual and social acceptance, respect, a deep awareness of the humanity of both sexes, and an equal valuing of men and women, different as they may be. As an ideology, feminism is not exclusive of men, as patriarchy is of women. Its values support the creation of an alternative moral universe, one which is not focused on power and control, or on the accumulation of the material at the expense of human or environmental systems. It allows for sustainability and mutuality and for choices. It offers a vision for the future which should encourage men to want to strike off the shackles of male hegemony all by themselves.

One of the unifying threads which informs women's experience is the consciousness that women's movements have existed throughout history. Like Penelope of old, women have used subterfuge to preserve 'spaces' for themselves within patriarchal systems. In ancient Greek mythology, Penelope achieved this: she distanced herself from her predatory suitors by weaving a burial cloth for her husband Ulysses, whose return she awaited, and then unpicking at night what she had woven during the day. Like her, the women's movement across the centuries has been kept alive by maintaining and subverting processes, by weaving and unpicking, by changing and undoing, by (outward) compliance and by subterfuge. In the twenty-first century, the lessons of all those ripped seams and broken tapestries need to be pulled together and woven into a new cloth.

## Notes

- 1 Interview with Gloria Scott, first Advisor on Women and Development, World Bank.
- 2 Special sessions of the General Assembly will focus on the follow-up to recent

conferences: the Fourth World Conference on Women (2000); the World Summit for Social Development (2000); the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (2001); and the World Summit for Children (2001).

3 After Amaryta Sen's work on 'entitlements'.

4 Personal communication from Peter Davison, Men for Change, Halifax, Nova Scotia. Other websites on men's networks include <[www.conscoop.ottawa.on.ca/mensnet/](http://www.conscoop.ottawa.on.ca/mensnet/)>; <[www.chebucto.ns.ca/CommunitySupport/Men4Change/m4c\\_back.html](http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/CommunitySupport/Men4Change/m4c_back.html)>; and <[www.whiteribbon.ca](http://www.whiteribbon.ca)>

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[Note to translator – no need to translate References below]

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