WOMEN WORKING FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT:

BARRIERS AND STRATEGIES

Report of a one-day seminar held at the University of Reading, February 1992.

Edited by Juliet Millican and Jancia Smithells

Published by Education for Development
1992
WOMEN WORKING FOR WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT:

BARRIERS AND STRATEGIES

Report of a one-day seminar held at the University of Reading. February 1992.

Edited by Juliet Millican and Jancis Smithells

Published by Education for Development
Contents

The Background: Alan Rogers .......................... 1

General Comment: Jancis Smithells ................. 2
Welcome: Chris Garforth ............................. 3
Setting the Scene: Juliet Millican ...................... 6

Saptagram’s Experience: Rokeya Kabeer ............ 8

Experiences from South America: Myriam Zia ........ 11
The Case of Zambia: Lucy Muyoyeta .................. 13
The Case of Sudan: Dinah Hakim ....................... 15

Reports from the Groups: edited by Jancis Smithells 17
Introduction ........................................... 18
Group 1: Social barriers and strategies .............. 19
Group 2: Separated or integrated programmes? ...... 23
Group 3: Multiple roles of women .................... 25
Group 4: NGOs, governments and consultants ........ 27
Appraisal of Action Plans .......................... 29

Concluding remarks: Juliet Millican .................. 30

Evaluation: Alan Rogers ............................. 32

List of participants .................................. 35

Figure 1: Development cycle ......................... 18
Figure 2: Women and social relationships .......... 22
The organisers, Education for Development, are grateful to the ODA for a contribution which enabled some of the participants from developing countries to attend this seminar.
THE BACKGROUND
Alun Rogers

This is the report of a one-day seminar organized jointly by Education for Development and the Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Department (AERDD) of the University of Reading in February 1992.

The seminar was introduced as follows:

"Over the past few years, there has been a substantial increase of interest in development programmes for and by women and especially in programmes which empower women to engage in their own development. This seminar provides an opportunity for those engaged in such programmes to discuss together the implications of women's self-reliant development programmes. It is not intended as a forum for academic debate but as a practical workshop, examining some of the barriers to women's involvement in their own development and some of the strategies which may be used to overcome these barriers.

The starting point of the Seminar will be the experiences of Mrs Banjary Rahmona Kabir who founded Saptagram Nari Swaraj Parishad (Women's Self-Reliance Council) in Bangladesh. This will be followed by dialogue on this experience led by Myriam Za at Columbia. Currently working for Christian Aid) and by two of the members of AERDD, Lucy Muyoyita (Oxfam, Zambia) and Dinah Hashim (Central Council of Churches, Sudan).

The agenda for the remainder of the day's work will be set by the participants on the basis of issues arising from the opening exchanges. It is anticipated that working groups will look at a number of practical issues in a variety of cultural settings such as:

- What are the major social barriers to women's participation in development and what strategies may be devised to overcome these?
- Should women's development programmes be gender-specific or integrated? Should they be gender-specific or form part of general development programmes?
- How far can the multiple roles which women are expected to play be reconciled with women's involvement in development?
- What forms of training and personal development are most appropriate for women in development programmes and how may these be provided?
- What should be the respective roles of government and NGOs in women's development programmes?

It is hoped that each working group will be able to develop an outline action plan which in the final session will be presented to a panel of appraisers for critical review.

52 persons attended this event. Many were from overseas studying in Britain, several came from aid agencies and others came from women's development programmes in the UK.

This report is offered to all those who attended as a record of what took place; and it is offered to others in the hope that something of what was learnt there will be of value to those who were not able to attend. We wish to express our thanks to all those who helped to plan and organize and run the seminar itself and to prepare this report: especially Margaret Keen, Anis Rahmona and John Best of AERDD."
GENERAL COMMENT
Janet Bhumibella

Robaya Kabir's account of her work in Bangladesh illustrated one approach to women working with women. She spoke of her experience of barriers, real and imagined, in women-run development programmes. It was a very direct, open and radical approach within a closed, traditional, hierarchic rural Muslim community.

She made no attempt to disguise the fact that she was an educated non-traditional, liberated, Westernised woman. An initial barrier might have been expected in terms of the assumptions of the rural women themselves. However, any negative reactions to 'Western values' on their part were readily overcome in response to the content of her message which was that their poverty and subordination were not immutable. She also found relatively little opposition from religious leaders, but her message and the actions which followed aroused hostility from other sources, namely the vested interests of the wealthy, political groups, government agencies and project funders.

Mrs Kabir depicted a confrontational, even violent situation, in which the timeworn strategies used by traditional and political elites to exert power and control by intimidation of women who challenged the status quo were set in high relief.

Although the statements of the respondents who followed the opening paper and of the members of the discussion groups tended to assume a more reformist approach to change, the theme of relating barriers to specific relationships provided a helpful conceptual structure, as did Mrs Kabir's account of the distinctive strategic phases in the process of change. Both of these approaches are reflected in the debate.

By linking problems to relationships barriers, there was an immediate focus for considering the nature of women's social, economic, political and cultural status. This led to strategies for improving and building on relationships as a basis for implementing specific changes, ranging from changes in attitude to revision of institutional practice and the law.
SETTING THE SCENE
Juliet Milliken

The original idea for today's seminar grew out of the fact that Mrs Rohaya Kabeer would be in England for a couple of days after spending several days in Scotland with a development agency called SEAD (Scottish Action and Education for Development). We felt that we should benefit from her being here by enabling other people to share her experience of starting up and running a women's development programme in Bangladesh which is staffed entirely by women. We have called the day 'Women Working for Women's Development', as we wanted to focus not only on women's development programmes which are rising higher on everyone’s agenda but on the specific problem of women working for and within these programmes.

The format for the day will be first a presentation by Rohaya Kabeer on her experience with Saptagram in Bangladesh. Outlining, I think, some of the problems that they have had to deal with. This will be followed by responses from Myriam Zena from Dinah Hakim and from Lucy Muyoyeta, who will compare some of the issues raised with their experiences in Latin America and in parts of Africa.

This will be followed by four workshops. One will discuss the major sexual barriers to women working for women's development, a second will look at the question of integrated or sectoral-specific programmes. The third will examine the multiple roles that women have to play, and the fourth will explore the respective roles of government and NGOs in women's development programmes. The four workshops will be convened by Dinah, Myriam, Lucy and Deryn Holland who works for adult education in Buckinghamshire in the UK.

The aim of the first workshop session is to raise the main issues and problems within the area of your workshop theme. During the second workshop session, we hope that you would be able to look at strategies for coping with these problems. Towards the end of the afternoon, we are going to ask each group to present their strategies to a panel for appraisal.

Finally the results of the workshop will be written up by Jancis Smith of AERDD who has agreed to act as rapporteur for the seminar. We sincerely hope that this event will be of value, not just to those who are here but also to women's development more generally.
SAPTAGRAM’S EXPERIENCE
Mrs Rahaya Kabir

I am here to tell you my experience of a rural based women’s project which we have organised. This organisation is directly geared towards the most deprived section of the community in the village and towards women. We make it very clear that it is a women’s organisation run by women for women. We do have a few men here and there but they are very much in a subordinate position. I think we took men into our project, a few of them in a lower category, so that they learn to take orders from the women. It is great fun!

Now, I am supposed to discuss here today what are the problems we faced and how did we overcome them. When a woman decides to work at village level in a Muslim society and Bangladesh is predominantly Muslim—the woman is expected to face lots of problems, especially when that woman is bent on working with the women and trying to change their lifestyle. I was discouraged by my family and definitely by my friends. Incidentally, I must confess here that I had never seen a village before I went to work in the village. I was told that I should not be accepted because I am too Westernized. I look terribly alien and everything is against me. But I am also an adenent creature. If I make up my mind that I am going to work with the women of the village, then I am going to go to the village and find out what the problem is.

From the women themselves I did not have much of a problem. Neither did I have a problem of people not accepting me. It is an urban belief that rural women are not educated, not this. nor that, are very conservative, reactionary etc etc and that they won’t accept you. It is not true. Rural women are very open. They may be amused by yourしゃ Messi blonde and lipstick worn and all that make up, because that is how I went in. But once you start talking to them, they can get through all of this outside facade and see the real person and what you are trying to do. I literally did not have any problem being accepted by the village women.

We had a number of other volunteers who came in and joined us, so we called the organisation a very romantic title, Saptagram Naix Swarnprav Parishad, which means the ‘seven villages women’s self-reliance movement’. Why seven villages? That was because I was frightened that I might not be able to pul it off and stay in the village and work, so I took a very small area to start with. But now we are reaching seven hundred villages, so we did manage to survive.

What were the problems we faced? Everybody said that we would be facing problems from the religious leaders. Now we do not have religious leaders like priests in the Hindu religion or in most Christian sects. We do have learned men in religion, and that learned man’s job is to tell us what religion says, if I do not know it myself. So he is not a power unless politics give him the power, unless he is used politically and thereby becomes powerful. When I was told that this is where my main problem was going to be, I found that that was not true.

There could have been a problem — but I was cleverer than those religious leaders. We read the Koran in Arabic and we do not understand it because we don’t learn the language; we read the Koran and learn it by heart and that is all we are. The long and the short of it is that we have to depend on others to tell us what it is all about. We follow certain rules and regulations concerning prayer and everything, but we do not really understand the religion. The outside facade is maintained among many people. We will pray five times a day and fast but never really know what religion expects you to do.

Now, I read the Koran in English. I cannot read it in Arabic. So I read it thoroughly because I had no intention of being blocked by the religious group. I thought, “they are powerful.” But in fact, when I met them, I found that they were not powerful. A little bit of mumbling which I faced about the way I have been going round encouraging the women to come out of their houses and all that sort of thing. I could easily push that away, because when they said that women are not supposed to come out of the house, I said, “Fine, go and teach them”
Because you see, I found a contradiction. Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world, and the village women whom I had chosen as my target group were the most deprived sector of that community. They are on starvation level and often they don’t know what to do about it because there is a question of purdah. Purdah is very peculiar. Nobody condones the women if they go out begging. But they are out of the house then. Nobody condones them if they go out to the rich man’s house to work in the harvesting season with very little food, never paid in cash but always in food. Nobody says that that is breaking purdah. But the moment I started providing them with some sort of jobs, income-generating activities, they said that we were breaking purdah.

So I said back, “What about begging? Why are they begging? Why are you rich and why do you allow this when Islam says that your neighbour should not be allowed to starve? So, let’s leave Islam alone and let me go ahead and do my work.” So I must say that I did not have to work very hard to overcome religious taboos. Though you would often think that this might be very difficult. In some other Muslim countries I think it is very difficult but not in Bangladesh, I did not have much problem.

The main problem came from the rich of the village. These women were working for them but with very low pay. Suddenly they were now involved in income-generating activities, earning their own money and all sorts of things and they were no longer going to the rich man’s house to work with little or no pay at all. So they tried to get into the organization so that they could control it. We resisted. We made it very clear that it is not a community development project, it is very much a class development activity. So when the rich people wanted to get in, we watched them for a few days to see how they walked, and then we said “no”. We cut ourselves out from them.

Immediately attack came from this quarter. The religious attack did not come but the class attack came. Naturally, there was concern among the rich of the village that I was upsetting the whole social structure. So I had to be stopped. Sometimes they took disastrous action. Burning houses and project equipment and people is quite popular. Luckily there was nobody in our project office when they burned it down. They poured kerosene or petrol on it. That was one action they took to stop me in my work, from going ahead.

At the time, we had several other girls working with us. These girls, instead of getting frightened were highly pleased. They said, “You know, we will be very lucky because the common saying is that when you burn something, if it turns red, then you are lucky but if it turns black, you will be unlucky. Our’s turned red, so we are lucky”. That was a lovely attitude. But I thought that I should not let them get away with it. In a village you know everything, nothing stays secret in a village. So I knew precisely who were the boys who had poured the kerosene and burned down the project office. So I reported them to the police. I said “I suspect these people of being responsible for burning down my project, and you should question them.” I did not want any particular action against them but some action. But the police did not do anything. I waited for nearly a month. The powerful leader of the gang was the son of a rich man. They were quite safe walking around. I got very mad and I hopped over to the nearest town. I said to the police there, “I can see those boys and you cannot see them”. I was really very angry. I said, “Listen, I am going to bring a charge of corruption against you”. I had by this time acquired a reputation of being a snitch. So this junior police officer said, “This woman is so aggressive, very very unkindness and badly unfriendly”. But they did not know, even the police, what I was capable of. For all they knew, I might have filed a case against them for corruption. So I said to them, “Look, you don’t have to arrest all six of them. The person you have to arrest and bring to the police station for questioning is the son of the richest man in the village”. So they had to go and get him. He was brought over. 24 hours questioning is what the law says. So he was held for 24 hours, and there was tremendous agitation in the village, especially among the rich. They tried to get him out even three hours before the 24 hours expired. You see, there is a great deal of face saving in our country and I think in a lot of countries, and if a woman gets her way against the richest and most powerful man, that is felt to be horrible. But the horrible thing happened: he could not get the boy out before the 24 hours were over. So that was a
good thing. That helped me in the project because through the bush telegraph, it went all over the place. God only knows how far it reached. So this woman won the first round.

Then came the second round. I was informed that I would be killed. They gave me a list of the arms that would be used against me—six guns, two guns, all those sorts of things. I was not impressed. It was done to frighten me; they wanted to frighten me so that I would leave the place. But I did not know what a six gun or a two gun is. I was not terribly afraid. But suddenly I kept an eye out. I didn’t like the idea of getting killed, but neither did I like the idea of being defeated. What they wanted was for me to leave the place in fear, and if I did leave the place, I would never return. So I just told them. I was living in a place completely alone, there was nobody there. But I knew which of the boys was supposed to kill me. So I spoke to them constantly, constantly chatting. “How will you kill me? You would use a six gun? How utterly idiotic! You know you could use a nice thick stick to hit me on the head from the back and I’d be dead.” So I gave them lots of tips on how to kill somebody. It became a joke among them and myself, and they said, “We don’t know why you are telling us that we are going to kill you.” I said, “People are telling us that you are going to kill us, to kill me.” Anyway, the village took it very seriously, and the village would be empty by six o’clock. Everybody would be hiding because they had gone through the 1971 liberation war and they knew what a brush fire is and they knew that, if they want to kill me, a lot of shooting will take place and many others might be killed. So that continued for between one and a half and two months.

Somewhere along the line, the villagers started to feel that this was terrible. “This woman is quietly going about her work as if nothing has happened, not caring who will be killed or not.” This was not quite true. I did care a lot whether I would be killed or not, but I did not show it. But they became frightened and started to take action. And village action is very interesting. They told the man who had made the threats, “You cannot cross our land.” The interesting thing was that he did not have to cross anybody’s land. He was rich enough to have a brick pathway right up to the main road, so he could always get to the main road along his own road. But this was a warning, a sign from the village that he was being boycotted by the village people. And he understood. I did not understand. “Why are they stopping you from walking over their land when you have a lovely road of your own?” I asked him. But that is the village custom; when they say, “Don’t touch my land”, that is the way they tell him that they disapprove of what he is doing. So, when it went too far, a delegation said to me, “Let’s have no problem. Why can’t we get together?” I said, “Of course we can get together.” “But you are angry with this man.” I said, “No, I am not angry with this man. It is some of the young boys.” They did not know what to do. I immediately became a peacemaker. I said, “Let’s have a meeting.” We met perfectly all right. The man was happy too. I told him, “No, you were not to be blamed. Children do many things.” So I let him know that he was the powerful man in the village and I was not challenging that. In fact, I was challenging it and I won, and he knows that I know it. But publicly I said a completely different thing: “we need co-operation”. So, this was one of our problems and how we managed to overcome it.

There were other problems. Here I must say that we have nearly 100 women staff together with the administrative staff at the office. Everybody stays in the village; we have centres in the heart of the village. We don’t stay in the towns. We make this a central point of our work. Our buildings are not substantial: usually one big wall and tin sheets and a wooden door which you can push and it would break. In other words, we had a roof over our heads but not much security. People did talk of us putting up a wall round the building which was very silly, because a wall building was not going to save us if someone was going to attack us. I think that by not putting up the wall, we told the people among whom we were working that “we belong to you and you belong to us. It is between us all that we will have protection. We must be protected by you, that is your business”. And it is true. In the 16 years I have been working in the villages, I never had any problem of the single girls living without any male guardian. I asked many of the girls before coming here, “Do you have any problems?” “Some of the boys make cracked remarks but that’s all.” But over here, even in England you find the same thing. So they said, “That’s the only problem we face.” Otherwise they are
perfectly all right. The protection comes from the people among whom we work.

In one or two cases, we did go a bit beyond our capacity. One of the areas we work in is dominated by the ultra left groups. What happened was that their leaders had died, shot by the Government, and they have now splintered into smaller groups. Now, who is political and who is a gangster is difficult to tell. So that particular area is quite deadly. Every night you'll hear shooting and every night somebody's house will be looted. Some women daughters or wives were raped. This is very common in that area.

So we moved in. There was not a single NGO working in that area. Three of our girls went in there and have stayed there from 1980 to today. Our strongest women's group comes from there, because they live under such pressure that in order to fight back, they have to be strong themselves. I must give credit to those three girls who went off where there was no security.

But it is interesting that even there we did not have problems. Some of these fundamentalist groups and political parties did have problems but our girls are a nasty lot also. I mean hard, very hard. They hit back. These groups were very angry with the girls and said, "You know, you haven't covered yourselves properly." So the girls replied, "Don't look them; under Islam, you are not supposed to look at us, so don't look. Who has asked you to look?"

We are having a constant battle with some of these groups, but not with the muslims, the religious advisors. It is the political parties who go against us, especially the fundamentalist political parties. Unhappily they are becoming stronger every day, and the present government is collaborating with this particular party.

But the women of Bangladesh are also fighting against religious overtaking society. I don't know how long we will manage to hold it back, but I think the Bengali always had a different sort of cultural background. We are not intensely religious. We are religious, of course, but we are not aggressively religious - we do not go round chopping people's heads off if they are not religious. So even this fundamentalist group may not be able to stand in our way.

If you want to move, then make your move and then try to work it out. What is needed is strength on the part of the women - and they are very strong, given half a chance. In fact, with no chance at all, they are very strong. They can look after themselves, and they are beginning to break out.

What other problems do we have as a women's project? We have certain problems from the government. We have to report to the government every year that we have centres here and there, that so many women are there and there. At first, they would not believe that the women were staying in the villages without any guardians. This guards thing is very popular with everybody in Bangladesh. Women must have a guardian; they must be protected by a father or a husband or a son. These young women - in the age group from 22 to 32 - should not be there alone. God help them. What might happen? or what might they be up to? So the government would not believe us and they went to investigate where we were, whether we were really there and what we were doing. But we were there. So the National Security Intelligence gave a report to the government that we were women of bad character. That is the report we have been having for the last five years. I asked the Intelligence chief, "Do you get this sort of report about male NGOs?" "No, they are not bad charactered, only a women's organisation can be bad charactered". As our organisation consists of women and in fact is the only big organisation for women, we are all immoral women.

Then there is the problem of funders. Funding agencies are male dominated, so we have to work hard to persuade them that what we are doing is good. There is a communication gap with the funders. They can communicate so much better with men and with men's NGOs. I am not saying that this is true of every agency but we do have this problem. Whatever we say to them seems to go over their head, but when they talk to men, there is a lot of brotherhood and friendship. It gets on your nerves. Some of the funders are getting over this but a large
number are still like that. With women, they cannot imagine what we are going to say or do. They are not at all comfortable with us. When they do come and when they do talk, they do not seem to like us. We are too aggressive, they say. There are two sets of attitudes here - the superior attitude of the developed country which is giving the funding, and the superior attitude of the male to the female. We do not pass either test. We do not accept the attitude of superiority of the developed countries coming to our country. Nor do we think that as men they are superior to us women. So in that way, we do not do very well with the funding agencies. That is one of the problems which women’s NGOs face.

But the women in the male NGOs are in a very bad position. Almost 99.9% NGOs are run by men. I have the greatest sympathy for the women who work in them. Like other walks of life, they go out and work under men. There is a sexual pressure put on them. Men will not believe that women are capable of doing something like a man, so on the whole the woman are put into small areas. Yet these same organisations will tell the whole world that they are working with women and that they have a huge women’s programme". These are the words of one of internationally famous NGOs in Bangladesh. They say that 90% of the money which they earn out is lost to women, but they do not have a single woman member of staff. How would they know what women are doing, what women want? If you want to work with women, you must have women to understand what is the problem. But that is not done by male NGOs. They are now desperately trying to get some women members of staff because there is pressure from the funders that they must have competent women in their organisations. They are always asking me how to find them. I said, "We have huge stacks of applications." But how?" I said, "Because they are safe. They are given dignity and responsibility. They are our friends and comrades. But to you, she is a woman, she is incapable, she is dumb, she should not be allowed to do this, she cannot possibly do this, she cannot possibly stay in the village alone". This is what all the male organisations say, that women cannot possibly stay in the village by themselves. Why cannot they possibly stay there? I am staying, we are staying. But they have decided that we cannot stay. So that is another problem which women face in the world.

Women can, if they use all their resources, if they combine into groups, solidarity, work for their own development. They will be faced with problems, but together they can confront these directly, and our experience has shown that they can win.
EXPERIENCES FROM SOUTH AMERICA

Myriam Zena, Christian Aid

I come from a funding organisation, but I also come from the South. One thing that I would like to say for the funding agencies is that they always try to do their best. Sometimes they take their time before they understand the situation and can respond in an appropriate way but they work on that. And I say 'they' because I am primarily a 'southener'.

I would like to talk about my experience. I would not like to claim to speak of Latin America, which is a huge continent. I am going to centre more on Colombia which is the country I know best and where I have had more contact with women's groups and the women's movement.

The groups of women and the organisations for women working with women in Colombia have come up mainly from the Popular Movement, responding to specific problems like violence (state or domestic) or lack of services or particular concerns women have as workers very different kinds of things. For example, the peasant women started working with their peasant union or peasant committees or groups in local places. They did a lot of work that was never recognised, then deciding that they had a voice and that they needed to be recognised, that they have rights, they put together the women's committees (as they were called) which started spreading everywhere. So there are lots of women's committees among the peasant women and they now have a national co-ordinating body which works together with the National Peasant Union. It is the same with the indigenous women which is the sector I spent more time with.

I lived in a community of Zenu Indians, an indigenous group in the north of Colombia. They began with land takeovers. A big problem in many countries in Latin America is the lack of land, so people struggle to get land to live on and to work so that they can grow their own food. The women worked as hard as the men trying to get land but it was never seen as real work. So in this particular community, four years ago, four women thought that it was not fair that all they were doing was not seen, even though sometimes they were doing a major part of the task because the community thought that the women would be less threatened than the men going into the land. So the women and the children usually went in front and in the end they got the land, while the men followed behind.

These four women started organizing. They formed committees, supporting them by making hats and fundraising through crafts and other activities. Three years ago, they had a small congress which 54 women attended. When I was there in March 1991, they had a second congress with five representatives from every women's committee—over 100 women were there. It was a great achievement.

It is the same in the shanty towns of which we have many, made up of people who have had to leave their land because of violence. There are many different kinds of violence in the rural areas, so people have to leave, either because of that or sometimes because they think they will find a nice job in the cities—which is not true.

There are many women organizing in those shanty towns. The type of problems which they encounter are, I think, very similar to the ones they encounter in Bangladesh and everywhere in the Third World and even here in the UK. Society, the way society puts it, says that women have this or that role and they cannot move out of it. There is also the 'macho' ideology. I think everyone understands that. Men are usually very jealous about women meeting other women or going out and meeting other people and organizing themselves against men. One thing I have noticed recently is that women are trying to bring men as much as possible into women's activities. I think they are getting good results from this. Their success is slow but it is coming.
In the particular case of the Zenu Indian women’s congress, while the 300 women were meeting on a farm for a period of five days, some of the men were looking after their children. Other men didn’t but at least they ’allowed’ the women to go. Some men were not very happy but . I think that is great. Also some of the male leaders in the community were very supportive of the women’s movement.

Other problems women face in that region are threats from the State. Colombia is at the moment engaged in what we may call a ‘dirty war’. Everything said that criticizes the state is taken as insurgency. Union leaders are killed every day. Women leaders are killed very often. Church people that are working with the poor—anyone who complains will often be forced to leave their place.

Another problem we have is displacement—not just of individuals but of complete families. When the man disappears or is killed (and disappearance is very common in Colombia), the women is left alone with the children. Very often she is afraid to stay in her local place, so she has to move out. She doesn’t know where to go. As well as economic problems, she has to confront the psychological problems and the isolation, not trusting other people because she comes from a difficult experience. There are many problems of this kind—homelessness, poverty, lack of time to participate in events with other people. Illiteracy is always a problem. If you go to a village or a shanty town in one of the cities, you will find that it is mostly the women who do not get access to education or to work or to anything that can benefit them.

The strategy which I found being adopted by the women is that some of the women are trying very slowly to educate their families that there is a different way. This is happening at the grass roots level with the help of other women who train them. They start to tell the male children that hugging a baby or cooking or doing the washing up, for example, are nothing to be ashamed of. And the husbands, little by little, are giving away a small bit of space to the women. Another thing they are doing is training in almost any subject in order to get the women together. This is something they are doing a lot in any way possible. Sometimes it may be something very traditional but at least they get together, they talk about their problems and become more confident. This process is tackled in different ways according to the circumstances or experiences and the problems which the various groups of women have to face.

This approach is women trying to take control of parts of their own lives in small ways and in small spaces.
THE CASE OF ZAMBIA
Lucy Mayoyeta

My experience is largely with the non-governmental sector. That is because of my work with OXFAM in Zambia for the last six years and my own membership of women's organisations in that country. So I will concentrate on that sector and look at some of the ways in which women have worked for women in that area.

To begin with, listening to Robeyza and Myrissa, one of the points which came to my mind is that, whilst the nature of women's barriers to development are similar, the extent and the manifestations are different in our different situations. It seems to me therefore important that each one of us should make a very clear analysis of our own situation, because that has implications for the strategies we adopt. For instance, in most parts of rural Zambia, class divisions are not very clear-cut, so to adopt a strategy that is class-based would need a lot of thinking through. Issues like the nature of government repression are very different. But that is not to deny that the problems that women face are the same the world over.

Coming back to Zambia, my experience is that at the grass roots level there are generally very few non-governmental organisations that are working with women. There are a few exceptions like the Young Women's Christian Association, but the major thrust is not towards working with women only at the grass roots level. My own organisation which is a funding organisation and which I think tries to look at issues of women, does work with some women-only groups and also with mixed groups. The whole issue of whether to work with women-only groups or to work with mixed groups - the advantages and disadvantages of either approach - is one that is constantly debated, at least in our office.

I would like to share with you my experience of a number of women's organisations, some of which I am a member of. These are mostly urban-based, drawing their constituents from the formally-educated middle-class women like me, if you like. These organisations include the Zambia Alliance for Women, Zambia National Association for Women in the Media and many others. A point worth mentioning is that for many of these organisations, the impetus for their formation grew out of the Women's Decade, especially in 1985. There was a lot of work done then in terms of awareness raising. That was when many people within Zambia, including myself, urged others to become interested in women's issues, to get organised and so on. For us, that period certainly did achieve something in terms of bringing women's issues to the top of the agenda and helping women to organise themselves.

Two experiences with which I have been involved may be mentioned. Perhaps I should say at the start that each of the women's organisations has followed its own programme. But when there have been issues of common concern, many of them have come together and fought together.

The first of these issues concerned the law of inheritance. I do not know how much people here know of the background to this matter, but the gist of it is that in Zambia the practice has been growing and is still growing that when women lose their husbands, their relatives rush in and grab all the property. Many women have been left destitute because of this practice. So the women's organisations got together at the end of 1986 and felt that it was actually time to put a stop to this practice. They felt that the best way of doing this was to get an Act through Parliament that would make property grabbing of this nature illegal. To refer to what Robeyza was saying about 'westernised women', that became an important issue in this case. The major criticisms were that it was these 'westernised' women who were creating the trouble - they want to kill their husbands and grab the property - that is the only reason they want to change the law. So the women's groups felt that they had to dispel this myth utterly. They did research work which showed that this was not a concern of a few 'westernised' women but in fact was a concern of all women in Zambia regardless of where they came from. There were a number of campaigns and debates. Finally at the end of 1989, the Act went through Parliament. That was a great achievement for us.
However that did not mean the end of the work because as you know, a law is one thing but to get the people to know that the law exists and to enforce it is another. So that became the next challenge, to inform women of the existence of this law and to find ways of ensuring that this law is enforced. Thus the challenges and the work still go on.

But some of the other work I have been involved in, for instance in the education of women at grass roots level on this law, have brought interesting results. We have had workshops where we have drawn together women who are already engaged in some kind of development projects (for workshops, for example) to discuss issues related to the law. We followed these up to see what are the issues coming up. Some people have claimed, of course, that "bad women are coming from the towns who are poisoning you". There is also another perception, that this kind of work has nothing to do with development. Some of the women said that they have been challenged, some of them within church groups, "We thought you were involved in development work but this is not development work". So it raises the whole issue of what is development work. The way we have countered this is to say, "What is a women's group if all the women are going to have nothing to live on anyway because all their property is grabbed or they are all battered and they never come to sew or knit or whatever it is the women's development groups are meant to be doing". We do not think that this kind of work has nothing to do with development.

My second experience is more recent. You probably know that it was only at the end of 1990 that Zambia moved from being a one-party state to being a multi-party state. This threw up a lot of interesting challenges for everybody, not least for us women. We felt that it was important to get into the act whilst everybody was excited and wanting to win votes and campaigning. This was our chance to make sure that women's concerns were not left out. So, largely again from the urban-based groups, women got together, held meetings to discuss what to do and finally a group called the National Women's Lobby was formed as a non-partisan group with the aim of ensuring that more women get into positions of representation. At that time, parliamentary seats were open for the taking and the general aim was to get more women into Parliament. The activities included educating women on why it is important to ensure that women are there to represent our views and giving support to women who are standing as parliamentary candidates irrespective of which political party they were standing for.

From our point of view, this was very positive. But in fact it was a point of major struggle. First of all, we had the press to fight. The press was very very negative about the formation and existence of this group. Their reports were never positive. Then the political parties refused to accept the group. Both the two major parties denounced the group and said there was no such thing as a non-partisan women's group. You have to decide that you support a particular political party or you don't exist. But the group has carried on into the new Republic which is what we now are, and has continued as an important pressure group on women's issues with the new Government.

The point that this raises is that, with the introduction of a multi-party system which is very new for us, we are going to face more challenges in terms of remaining united as a non-partisan women's group, not dividing along political lines. It will be interesting to hear the experiences of people in other countries. What are the possibilities of this and what the kind of dangers facing us?
I come from a different part of Africa. The situation in my country, Sudan, as you see it reported on the television, would not have permitted me to be here to talk today. But the history of the country before the civil war makes me have to speak. So we will remember how Sudan was when it was peaceful. We shall put aside whatever is on the media about famine, civil war and see how the work was.

I worked with an intermediary organisation called the Sudan Council of Churches, which puts me right in the middle of the three speakers. I do not know how one regards herself or himself playing an intermediary role. Where do you belong? Is it being non-aligned, as they call it in international politics? One must have a side. When you are a change agent, whom do you belong to, the people or to your employing agency? These are the issues which pose for me a dilemma on behalf of that organisation.

I worked on the Southern Sudan programme of the Sudan Council of Churches. The organisation is a national body run by Sudanese. We have a few expatriates or foreigners in specific projects but not too many, and most are technical people. Sudan Council of Churches has two major programmes: a relief programme and a development programme I worked in the development programme.

Southern Sudan is basically a rural area. The members of the Sudan Council of Churches are the Christian denominations in the Sudan. Being both a funding organisation and a people's organisation, our role is partnership between the funders and the people's local organisations. It is a very hard position to be in because either you have to design projects to meet the funding criteria or you have to consider the people's organisations (we don't deal with the people direct but go through their organisations).

Among these people's organisations are some women's groups. I would not call them women's organisations because they have not reached that level. They are groups which come under certain umbrella organisations which could be a church, a professional body or a political union.

The history of the Sudan Women's Union goes back a long way, to the beginning of the twentieth century. It was started by a man who had daughters. Some of you may have heard of the only women's university in the country, in the north, but we in Southern Sudan did not have such an institution. Culturally the people in the south are very different from those in the north. There is no seclusion of women as mentioned by Roleys. Although religion and tradition segregate men and women, in the classes young people all go together. Segregation really begins with the employment sector; but in the school, we sit for the same examinations. We go climbing the trees together with the boys, we play together, if there is an adventure of going to the bush, we all go together.

The Sudan Council of Churches is not tied strongly to religion but it is an organisation formed by a number of institutions for development work. The project with which I worked is a rural development programme. Being dependent on funds from outside puts the SCC in a difficult position in supporting the people's organisations. I have worked as a woman in a mixed group of men and women and again linking myself to women only groups. I was in an intermediary role, sometimes having to adopt a low profile, to keep quiet, being challenged by both my male and female colleagues. Sometimes I was accused of being too outspoken by my women colleagues who are in the same category as I am, who would think that I was trying to be a leader. As a woman in the office, working with other women, doing the same tasks, I found that we had many differences, ideologies and principles which was very challenging. When I went to the rural groups, the problems were different, they would think, 'Maybe she is coming with a good idea.'
An intermediary organisation, as we have understood it, is one which is not owned and controlled by its members. Basically, the principles are laid out in its rules and regulations, but the benefits are supposed to go down to the rural people or to the people's organisations. In one of my appointments, my boss wrote to me saying that rural development would now focus on food production, rural industries, health, water development, family welfare, leadership development and self-help encouragement which is developed with the people's organisation through education. Then he added: "Your special role will be focusing on women within the overall work of the rural development programmes." I always try to pick up that statement wherever I go. Why did my boss have to write this to me? I was left on my own to restructure a women's office which had been in disrepair all the years since the Sudan Council of Churches started. My predecessors had started it and had left; now it was called a Welfare Office. It has now changed again to be concerned with women's work in the overall programme. Even in the budget, you see the item 'Women's work.' I was sick of all of this. Why do you call it women's work in a development programme? Some of my women colleagues in the office liked it that way but I did not. If I had written the report, I would have changed it to 'women's development programme', to follow within the framework of the rural development programme. One of my women colleagues said that the women must remain women, and that since I am working in the rural development office, I should not be involved in women's work with women only.

One of my problems was communication between different parts of the organisation. I had to prepare two reports, one from the women's office and the other a general report. I had to do this for three regions, liaising with the men in the other offices. In all the three regions there were women's offices but I could not go directly to deal with the women workers in those regions because they have their own administration at that level, although technically I had to liaise with them.

The chance was there but we did not always know how to go about it. It was an issue of structure, where women's development is not incorporated into the general plan of the organisation but annexed to a general development programme. This is a dilemma for the planners, but the end result is always that the women's programme is either truly independent or truly integrated — it remains in suspension.

A second problem was caused by disputes within the organisation itself. Before I left in 1988, I launched the 'Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity' programme with women. I think it did not prove to be popular. I have tried to read reports about this Decade but I have so far been unable to find anything. But I organised it. The women wrote to me saying that they wanted me to develop team leadership to launch this. I made sure that I was not doing everything for the women; I divided them into groups and each group had a leader. But I had challenges from the top Church leaders when I invited them to conduct the launch. I asked the Catholic and the Anglican churches to do this. But they wrote, 'What do you want exactly for the Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity' for women?' That was a challenge. The Catholic Church was very very reserved about it; I got the worst challenges from them.

As I have indicated, the Sudan Council of Churches does not deal directly with religious matters. Its main role is to respond to relief and development needs. But we managed the launch when I produced the first Newsletter 'Women in Rural Environment.' So I gave it to the Archbishop to announce it and to distribute it.

My general point is that my experience suggests that sometimes the barriers to women working for women's development may in fact lie in the organisations which support and manage the programmes as well as outside of them.
REPORTS FROM THE GROUPS
Summarised by Jancis Smithells, Seminar Rapporteur

Group 1: What are the major barriers to women working for women’s development and what strategies may be devised to overcome them?

Group 2: Separation or integration: Which way for women’s development programmes?

Group 3: How far can the multiple roles which women are expected to play be reconciled with women’s involvement in development?

Group 4: What should be the respective roles of NGOs and Governments in promoting women working for women’s development programmes?

In summarising the group discussions which each lasted over two hours, much important detail has necessarily been omitted. In drawing out structures from the many sheets of newsprint which the groups produced, from the reports to the plenary session and from further discussion with the group leaders, I hope that all the participants will recognise in this report the main diagnostic and prescriptive themes that they identified and will find the edited statements familiar and meaningful.

The content and direction of the discussions could be said to revolve around three concepts or models:

(i) The multiple roles of women

This concept can be represented in a variety of ways but however the content is categorised the fact of women’s multiple roles is fundamental to the debate (see especially Group 3). Women’s roles are commonly identified as reproductive, productive and social, with community/political roles as a potential area of activity from which rural women are often excluded.

(ii) The environment

Significant interpersonal and inter-group relations of different kinds, in the context of women working with women, can be usefully classified as personal, institutional, and cultural/political (in-country and international). In discussing problems and strategies, reference was made at different times to all three levels (see especially Groups 1 and 4). The model has been adapted from Bronfenbrenner’s nested model of the environment (see page 18).

(iii) A process model

This model was supplied by Group 2 to represent the stages by which segregated groups could prepare for and implement a process of integration and joint action (see page 22).
Figure 1  Women and their social relationships, based on Bronfenbrenner's nested model, as cited in I. Sugarman. Lifespan Development: concepts, theories and interventions (McGraw, London 1985).

Diagram: Women at the center, surrounded by concentric circles labeled:
- International Aid
- Culture
- The larger institutions
- Network of personal settings
- Reproductive
- Social
- Political/Community
- Productive
- Personal settings in interaction
- Donor Agencies
- Language + Customs + Mores
- Organized religious + Employment
- Economics + Mass media
- Government + Education + Services
GROUP I

What are the major social barriers to women working for women’s development and what strategies may be devised to overcome them?

Group I’s discussion of barriers to women working for women’s development highlighted a variety of negative relationships in the social environment – interpersonal, institutional and cultural (see model on page 22). These in turn became the focus for identifying objectives and developing strategies for change in order to overcome these barriers, empower women, especially the poor, and facilitate development.

In their listing of barriers or constraints under general headings such as education, employment and culture, there could be discerned specific relationships between poor women and other individuals, and between poor women and specific groups and institutions. For example, with educated women, traditional leaders, teachers, policy makers and donor agencies (see also Group 2). The negative outcomes of these relationships for poor women were seen to include low self-esteem, ignorance of rights, lack of resources, subservience to men, limited perception of the world and fear of violence and of rejection.

In seeking to reverse or ameliorate these outcomes, the group identified a variety of positive objectives and, in most cases, a set of strategies for meeting them.

1. Women’s relations with themselves and their roles

   **Objectives**
   - Positive valuation of women’s abilities and traditional knowledge, together with awareness of limitations imposed by other traditional values.

   **Strategies**
   - Mutual awareness of gender issues by men and women through organisations, education and employment (see items 2, 3 and 4 below).

2. Women and other women (and men)

   **Objectives**
   - Solidarity of all classes, of all women and of men and women empowerment of women, problem solving, breaking down barriers.

   **Strategies**
   - Organisation through groups to gain the support of men to help meet women’s needs (see also Group 2).

   - Integration of women at all levels to give them a voice.
1. Women and the education services

**Objectives**
- Gender equality, removal of gender biases and discrimination in terms of access and choice of subject
- Increased awareness of stereotyping in socialisation (at home and in school)
- Critical awareness of local context
- Management skills for women
- Empowerment of women

**Strategies**
- Workshops for policy makers in education to revise values, reduce prejudice, leading to more positive policies and practice
- Revise teacher training and re-train teachers (in gender awareness)
- Localise curricula
- Revise educational texts (eliminate gender bias)
- Ensure equal access to and provision of formal and non-formal education at all levels

4. Women and other services

**Objectives**
- Preserve health, save energy, time, labour, thus providing more choice for women
- Reduce stress of multiple roles

**Strategies**
- Ensure legal rights to land and access to training and credit services
- Provide child care facilities
- Provide appropriate technologies

5. Women and employment

**Objectives**
- Provide an 'eye-opener' - a wider view of the world for women
- Give the opportunity to test abilities and strengths
- Provide sources of income and hence of power

6. Women and the media

**Objectives**
- Communication and sharing of information
- Reinforcement of women's rights, recognition (through gender representation) of gender related realities

**Strategies**
- More and better use of a variety of media by and about women
The overriding objectives in breaking through social barriers, as seen by Group 1, were:

- The solidarity of all women
- The support of men for women's needs and concerns
- Raising the critical awareness of women
- The development of a positive self-view for women
Figure 2. Development cycle for women's development (Group 2) showing how a programme for segregated women's groups can lead to integrated and joint action.
GROUP 2

Separation or integration: which way for women's development programmes?

The question was re-formulated by the group. Should women in development programmes be sectional, specific or integrated? Should they be gender specific or form part of general development programmes?

Group 2 was greatly exercised by this issue, having identified the advantages of women only groups while also acknowledging the necessity of mixed groups for collaboration in certain activities. Forestry projects were given as an example.

Running through the discussion was the assertion that women lacked certain experiences which gave confidence, a sense of solidarity and the capacity for self-assertion necessary for working in a mixed group.

"Women have to find the power to be able to work with men. Women's groups are needed to find approaches to find power. Be it social, economic or political."

"Women have different models of managing things not necessarily through leadership."

Segregated groups of men and women were therefore seen as a necessary preparation for integration. It was also suggested that men should be given some form of preparation for the new experience of working with women as equals.

A disadvantage of segregated groups on a long-term basis was seen to be that women can be marginalised. It was proposed that segregated groups should be seen as essentially a preparatory measure by all parties.

"When women are separated it is important that they know why."

"Women do need their own space but must be clear about its purpose."

"Women's groups need to be women's groups as well as tackling things in a mixed situation."

Another issue concerned conflict. Could conflict over upsetting social barriers be constructive/creative?

"Sometimes women need to organise for themselves to address women centred issues."

The ultimate goals was seen to be the collaboration of men and women in problem solving with regard to shared concerns. A culture of equality and mutual respect was envisaged, with heightened awareness on both sides of the nature of previous barriers to dialogue between the sexes, and with a willingness to overcome them. (Group formation around an issue or activity, without regard to gender, was seen as a natural outcome of this stage by stage strategy (see model overleaf).)
GROUP 3

How far can the multiple roles which women are expected to play be reconciled with women's involvement in development?

The discussion began with a listing of women's multiple roles. They included not only the traditional reproductive, productive, and social roles but also such new responsibilities as those associated with the challenge of the AIDS epidemic. The group also enumerated the less often recognized community roles such as counselor and 'shoulder to cry on', student (e.g., in literacy classes), source of information (e.g., where to go, who to go to) and taxi service.

The problems (barriers and constraints) which made it difficult to reconcile these roles with participation in development and the strategies proposed to increase women's involvement in the development process are summarised on the following page.

As with Group 1, these strategies involve building on and improving where necessary existing relationships in a) the immediate social environment (with other women, with men, with local leaders etc); b) with social institutions (with women working with women as teachers, as policy makers, with credit, training and education services etc), and c) further afield with the donor agencies. The imperative seen by this group, as with others, is that the problems addressed should be those identified by the rural women themselves.

It is here that the lack of a working definition of development can present some confusion, since the overcoming of obstacles of the nature described can itself be seen as either part of the process of development or as a means towards an increasing participation in specified development (especially economic) activities.

The goals of the UN Decade for Women were 'equality, development and peace'. Perhaps in these terms, we can see the conclusions of Group 3 as addressing the sub goal of equality as a means of liberating women's talents and energies in the interests of achieving the other goals of development and peace. The Group's perspective is perhaps summarised in an old adage which was quoted in the group, 'Wherever you see a strong man, there is a strong woman behind him'. Their concern was that the strengths of women should be recognised, and that they should stand alongside men in the mainstream development effort.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems/barriers/constraints to women's involvement in development</th>
<th>Related strategies (see classification below)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* time</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* energy</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* sexual problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) attitudes and behaviours</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- expectations and pressures (largely male)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- restrictions, negative feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- conformity (of women)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- false assumptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) social structures and value systems</td>
<td>1 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- women's dependence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- exclusion from decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- failure to recognise women's achievements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- resistance to change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- lack of communication network for women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- lack of 'space' for women to talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- lack of empowerment of women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- outdated legal system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- unpaid labour</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- lack of cash income</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* external agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- attitudes of development agencies</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies to increase women's involvement in development

1. Identify influential leaders/individuals
2. Education and training, formal and non-formal, to create awareness. This should address the women's priorities and should include the education of men as well as women.
3. Access to resources e.g. credit
4. Utilise existing resources
5. Encouragement of collective action
6. The need for more women working for women at all levels - i.e. grass roots and policy levels
7. Introduce appropriate technology for women.
GROUP 4

What should be the respective roles of NGOs and Governments in promoting women's development programmes?

After some initial discussion, Group 4 divided into three sub groups to examine the roles of a) government agencies, b) NGOs, and c) consultancies respectively, prior to a full group meeting.

The relative importance of the roles of governments and NGOs proved difficult to resolve but the collective discussion distinguished:
1. sets of significant organisational relationships
2. conditions which influenced these relationships.

Important relationships influencing work with rural women were identified as between governments and their respective NGOs within both donor and recipient countries. One example given from a donor country was the close working relationship between the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) and OXFAM (UK). This sort of linkage in turn was seen to influence the nature of the aid offered by the donor NGOs (like OXFAM) to Third World countries.

Turning to recipient countries, national governments were seen as necessarily involved in any transaction between donor and resident NGOs. In many cases, national governments were seen to give precedence to their own programmes, regarding their country's NGOs as filling the gaps. In country NGOs were regarded as being limited by their government's definition of development. Governments often lacked an understanding of the objectives of their NGOs and failed to differentiate among them. These observations about barriers at national and international levels can also be related to the model on page 22 above.

There was some discussion of the control mechanisms which donor agencies sometimes adopted to regulate the implementation of the programmes they sponsored. One control mechanism was that of having regional or country representatives of donor agencies. However it was suggested that these posts were increasingly being filled by nationals of the recipient country. Another form of control exerted by donors and to some extent replacing the former one is that of employing short term consultants to monitor and evaluate projects (the ideal consultant was defined as 'a good listener')

The nature of these relationships or chains of relationships was seen to be coloured by policies pertaining to aid and by in-country policies regarding the development process as a whole. Hence the choice of the organisational structure for reaching women in the development process could operate more or less constructively, depending on the assumptions made centrally. These assumptions were seen to have an impact on both government and NGO programmes and on the relationship between the two. It was suggested that national governments often had little understanding of NGO policies regarding development, so that it remains an uncomfortable partnership.

Another issue concerned the gender of staff operating within all three types of organisations and programmes. The over-riding consensus was that the selection of officers in government, NGOs and consultancies should be based on ability. "If a man is better qualified to do it, let him do it". "A gender-aware male consultant is better than a woman consultant with no gender awareness". It was believed that women-only projects, programmes and departments had the disadvantage of cutting off female professionals career-wise and that on balance, even if women were fully qualified and placed in a women's programme with the best of intentions, it was not necessarily to the advantage of the career of the woman professional concerned.

These propositions about recruitment applied to government and international donors, national governments, NGOs and consultancies. It was felt that there should be a requirement that
women are represented at all levels and that training should be used to enable more women to qualify. It was also observed that the limitations in the numbers of qualified women and the lack of real equal opportunities could operate against women in many ways, for example in excluding them from appointment as NGO country representatives.

Strategies to mitigate these quasi-political issues were evidently difficult for the group to identify. However, there were some specific recommendations regarding the issue of recruitment:

promote gender awareness across the whole of a development programme, not just in women's projects.

do not over promote women because of their gender without support and training

while pressing for equal opportunities in employment, do not overlook other forms of oppression, for example class, ethnicity, race, income level etc.

train local trainers

integrate training within projects so as to make the project outcomes sustainable

train for equal opportunity awareness
APPRAISAL OF ACTION PLANS

A general discussion followed the presentation of the group reports. A number of very
different points were raised during the discussion. There was to start with a strong emphasis
on the importance of income-generation programmes for women's development, because
many of the participants saw the main problem as lying in women's poverty.

With income, women are making demands
Money is power Roles are shifting

This led to a vigorous debate on whether, in projects designed to help rural women, there was
a place for activities which are traditionally seen as 'women's work' such as sewing and other
handicrafts, or whether this strengthened stereotyping of women's roles. Rukaya Kabeer
firmly and humorously took issue with those supporting a pragmatic approach to income
generation projects, insisting that much of the problem lay with the lack of power which
women suffered, arising from traditional roles imposed on women who often wished to escape
from these prescribed roles. The issue of stereotyped or non-stereotyped roles and activities
was debated energetically from all sides: some of the diversity of views is reflected in the
following quotations:

"Women must remain women"
"We can take big steps. We are only taking small steps. We are limiting ourselves"
"Don't become a secretary - employ one"
"Sewing can sometimes be right"
"What is the right point of entry? If you can find a non-stereotyped one, it will be
more effective"

Later, the discussion from the floor turned to the wider social context, emphasizing specific
vehicles for strategic change, including the women participants themselves. Rather than
others 'empowering women', some stressed that women can empower themselves. Those
women who have been more privileged than their colleagues have a responsibility to help in
this process:

"Educated women must be catalysts for change"

Others stressed the importance of political support which they believed was nowhere:

Governments have women on their agenda

The debate concluded on a positive note, with the expressed hopes that women were now
arising, that some men were helping women to break free, and that seminars like this one
advanced the cause of women's development:

"Change is taking place very fast".
CONCLUDING REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR
Juliet Millican.

We started the day by hearing a stimulating account of what sounds like a very dynamic women’s organisation in Bangladesh. We also heard about some of the problems they have had. And these were by no means small problems. They ranged from the burning of buildings and marginalisation by funding agencies to threats of death.

I reminded myself of what was said earlier: perhaps there are no answers here, only strategies for coping.

This was followed by three very varied accounts from different contexts within Colombia, Zambia and the Sudan. Lucy reminded us of the importance of analysing the particular situation in which we find ourselves, not holding on to set answers but looking to our own problems in order to find a way forward. We heard of the different pressures brought by different dominant beliefs such as fundamentalism, Islam, or what may be called ‘machismo’, and the ways women have worked within these.

As I circulated round the workshop groups before lunch, I was even more aware of the very different backgrounds people were coming from as they debated what I had thought were four completely separate questions. The groups were covering sheets and sheets of flip chart paper as they outlined what they felt were the problems within their particular question. The problem areas seemed vast.

When I returned after lunch, things had become more focused. Energy levels were rising as people debated strategies for dealing with the problems they had identified. Yet it seemed that the same sort of issues were coming up again and again. Looking back at the presentations we had, I feel that they were saying very similar things. As I see it, they were concerned with

- allowing women a voice in decision making and giving them the confidence to use it
- helping women to redefine their roles
- helping women, perhaps initially in women’s groups but eventually in integrated groups (because don’t we after all want integration on an equal basis?) and negotiate a future alongside men.

This leads me to think that perhaps in the end it is very simple.

Before we started, a colleague said to me, “I hope it goes well today. I’m not really an expert on gender issues myself”. I wondered if in fact I was. By the evening I had decided not only that I am, but that we all are. By the very nature of our being, as students in Higher Education or as professional women in what was previously a male bastion, we have been dealing with these issues on a day to day basis. Admittedly, some of us have had it easier than others. Those who are from overseas, perhaps having left husbands and children behind, have probably had it hardest of all. My greatest admiration is for them. We have made use of the training we have received within formal education to find a voice in decisions about ourselves.

The importance of training is another area we talked much about. Now perhaps it is our turn to use the training we have had to work with other women, not in the way Group 3 reminded us of, imposing the ideas of intellectuals on people at the grass roots but as Rohzaya Kabeer inspired us, to share with them our vision for the future.

For although the solutions in the end may be simple, bringing them about will not be. During the morning, I heard someone in Lucy’s Group describe, with a wonderful analogy, the shift of power relations. “If I were rich”, she said, “someone asked me to share my wealth with a poor man, I might refuse. I might say, no, I have earned this power, it’s mine, I’m going to hold on to it”. She said, “It’s the same with power between men and women. If we
We can all benefit from learning the history we have to share and develop.

Is there any harm in sharing our stories and experiences?

Because with power to tell stories, there is room to share, document, and account for our experiences. And when we gather to document our stories, we gather to create a richer and more meaningful legacy.

资源共享：因为分享故事也可以让我们的经验得到记录和传承。在我们分享故事的时刻，我们可以创造更丰富和有意义的历史。
EVALUATION
Alno Rogers

This evaluation attempts to make an assessment of the achievement of goals, both the goals of the providers of the seminar and the goals which the participants identified for themselves, to ask whether the seminar achieved its purposes and to try to identify some of the factors which accounted for the achievement or under-achievement, and secondly it attempts to identify some of other outcomes which might have arisen from the seminar.

Responses were sought from the seminar participants through an assessment form which was sent to the 52 participants, nine responses were received. These returns may not reflect the general opinion among the participants.

It may be noted that the responses from the overseas participants and the UK-based respondents varied considerably. The most positive responses to the seminar came from the overseas participants. Many of the UK-based participants tended to be rather more critical. For many of the overseas persons, this was their first experience of this kind of participatory workshop and sometimes of addressing the issues raised in it. They tended to want to see wide issues. Several of the UK participants on the other hand felt that the seminar addressed ‘old issues’ and did not advance the arguments further. Equally the overseas respondents tended to request more input on specific matters, a more directive approach, rather than the more open-ended discussions which tend to characterise UK seminars.

In addition to the responses to the evaluation form, personal discussion with many of the participants during and after the seminar as well as observation throughout the day have both added much to this evaluation.

GOAL ACHIEVEMENT:

The goals of the providers were stated as being threefold: to provide an opportunity for participants in women’s development programmes both in the UK and overseas to meet and to share leading to (i) increased understanding of the task of women’s development and to (ii) networking; secondly to look at one model of women’s development (chiptagram) to see how far it might be applicable to other cultural contexts; and thirdly to provide an opportunity for the participants to stand back and reflect and through this to increase their commitment and confidence.

In order to achieve these goals, a mix of participants was needed. The organisers aimed at three main categories of participants: UK practitioners, overseas practitioners and aid agencies. The 52 persons recruited fell into almost equal numbers in each of these three categories. The recruitment thus resulted in a mix of committed people from various countries and regions with a wide range of experience. The conditions and the context were such that these participants met together well and there was not so much ‘talking past each other’ as there has been on some other occasions.

On the whole, it would seem that the participants, as indicated by the respondents, shared these aims. Eight of the nine respondents said they had come to meet others and to share; six said they had wanted to reflect over the whole area of women’s development; and five said they wanted to listen to the particular case study. Asked in general whether these objectives set by the providers had been met, there were different judgments but most of the respondents said ‘yes’.

Sharing experiences and increase of understanding: terms like “excellent”, “opened my eyes”, “fresh insights” were used in several of the responses. Asked how successful the event had been in sharing and increased understanding, one said “extremely”, while another said “not very”. “Issues were not fully explored”; “sadly I felt we were going over old ground” – I was expecting to be more challenged.”
Networking: Few felt they had achieved anything in networking. "One or two telephone numbers", the seminar "provided some new contacts, not sure how these will work.

Confidence: Several felt they had gained in confidence. Although responses to this question included phrases like "not inspiring", "partially", "not confidence but a sense of solidarity and re-energising", there were those who felt they had "gained from others". "One thing I learned is that I should not give up if I met with difficulty in a plan to do something or to work with women at grassroots level" (this sentiment was repeated three times). One participant went away determined "to keep my spirits up I feel challenged..."

Participants' goals: Asked what their own goals had been and whether these were similar to those of the providers, the respondents spoke of "personal enlightenment", "inspiration", "to explore issues in depth". Most felt that their goals had been achieved, with the answers including "yes" in very good measure", or "partially"

The participants were asked what they felt were the most useful and the least useful parts of the seminar. Here as elsewhere the answers were contradictory. Several of the respondents listed as the most useful features of the day being Mrs Kaber's talk ("encouraging, motivating"), "the experience of someone who is real like Mrs Kaber's presentation"; the working groups (especially their size), and the reports from the group, the final open debate, and meeting new people. The "real experiences described", and the "mixture of participants also received mention. The time to circulate at coffee/tea and lunch was appreciated.

But the aspects of the seminar which were to be least useful included many of the same features - the rushed presentations at the end, the keynote address ("if she only noticed that she was talking to someone of similar status"), the groups (too general; not enough time "more time should have been allocated to the group discussion and the presentations and less time for the introductory part"; [our group] "lacked direction for a good proportion of the time"; "our group took a long time to get going and then didn't have time to explore some of the more challenging areas") The time for the seminar (too much was attempted in a short time) and the general nature of the discussion were felt to have been drawbacks. There was a need to address specific issues. One respondent was distressed by what he/she discerned as an "anti-man" bias among some of the participants. Another said, "I felt the seminar partially met my expectations but felt a little disappointed that with the wealth of expertise, the opportunity to explore some issues in depth was not taken up."

OTHER OUTCOMES:

The list of other outcomes which derived from the seminar was wide from such a small group: "Nothing dramatic: my awareness was further enhanced and the experiences of that day have encouraged me to review programmes closer and encourage others to reflect on their current attitudes"; "I have discussed these issues with colleagues". An invitation has been extended to Robeys Kaber to visit Tower Hamlets. Some claimed that "I will look closer at my programmes"; "be more realistic". "As a result of the discussion, I am more aware of sexist bias", and of "the importance of religion in the development of women. "The strength of my belief of what the issue is all about is another outcome of the seminar - no more submission but a radical movement". One commented on the emphasis on "donor-recipient problems and how to start with real grassroots needs." 

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE:

There was a clear demand for "more input from the invited speakers", and for more specific questions to be discussed. "I would have felt more challenged if we could have dealt with more specifics and explored these". Again several felt that they would have liked more time. There was a feeling that there had not been enough time for what was attempted: "if we could have had a two or three day seminar, it would have been better"; "a weekend seminar. In particular, some change in the group work was needed to make them more focused; "better
organisation of the small groups. "In the working groups, reduce the scope of the questions or list some points." In particular, a better mode of presentation of group findings was needed at the end.

GENERAL

Such comments show that the seminar including the group work was appreciated. The general comments were positive. "Very good and well organised", "very fruitful". "What I attended was an outstanding and excellent experience, how within a day we managed to get together and do such a huge workshop. It was all well designed". "It opened my eyes to issues which I previously thought there is no way out". "Fresh insights" is the phrase which is most often repeated. "I have learned lots of ideas and hope one day I will use these ideas". "I feel that such meetings are very important to keep the spirits up and bounce ideas off other people as well as an occasion where one might be challenged on certain attitudes and ways of thinking". "I'm certain the seminar will continue to have a lasting effect on me." "It highlighted many of the issues which have been my concern lately"

PERSONAL NOTE

The atmosphere during the day - despite (or perhaps because of) the poor weather outside - was bright and cheerful, strongly cohesive and purposeful. This was commented on by many of the participants.

It was inevitable, given the fact that a large group of people, relative strangers to each other, was engaged (sometimes for the first time) in covering a whole field of discussion with examples drawn from all over the world, that there was a tendency for the groups to try to be comprehensive, to spend most of their time drawing up long lists of problems and even longer lists of possible strategies to overcome these problems. I found this surprising, since the tone of the seminar from the start was anecdotal, based on concrete case studies. Perhaps it reflects the academic context in which the seminar took place or the fact that many of the participants were students in higher education. Or perhaps it reflects the open-ended nature of the tasks set; clearer guidance might have been given by the planning team. There was not enough time for the groups to prioritize. It is true that many of the proposed solutions were clearly impractical, some were in the nature of general principles rather than serious proposals for action, and many called for action by others, not by the participants themselves. But there was certainly no hint that this represented any attempt by the participants to run away from dealing with the issues themselves. While it can be argued that a smaller number of realistic suggestions as to positive action which we could all have taken would have been more profitable at the end of the day than a full scale analysis of the whole problem, it is clear that all the groups ended up with a number of possible lines of action and general principles which will provide a launching pad for more specific and practical strategies.
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Ahmed Asa M, 8 Hillside, Allofcroft Road, Reading RG1 5DJ.

Ahmed Ibrat, 19 Wokingham Road, Reading

Ashley Elmsorfer Z, AERDD

Barber Sue, War on Want, 37 39 Great Guildford Street, London SW1 0ES

Car Susan, World Vision of Britain, Dychurch House, 8 Abington Street, Northampton

Cromwell Geoffrey, International Cooperative College, Stanford Hall, Loughborough

Danayanti Sri, 8 Hillside, Allofcroft Road, Reading

Devra Susan, BBA Aantill Road, London E3 3BP

Elmsorfer Susan, Forestry Department Extension Office, PO Box 190, Kasala, Sudan

Ehruras Fotini, 25 Elgin Crescent, London W11 2ID (Kenya)

Fayyida Richard, World Vision of Britain, Dychurch House, 8 Abington Street, Northampton

Gedim Gabby, West Hill College, Wooley Road, Birmingham (Papua New Guinea)

Gomez Zangana Rosibel, University of Sussex, Flat C, 5 Rose Hill Terrace, Brighton BN1 4JL (Honduras)

Goad Liz, 27 Saltwood Grove, London SE17 2HJ. (Sierra Leone)

Green Sylvia, 376 Mucklefield Road, High Wycombe Bucks HP13 7HZ

Gromoe Jane, AERDD

Haddo Idia, Sibby Hall, Redhatch Drive, Earley, Reading

Hakim Dimah, AERDD, (Sudan)

Haidm A M Abid, 58 London Road, Reading RG1 5AS

Harding Jill, Old Farm House, Cane End, Reading RG4 9HL

Holland Derya, 13 Green Road, Terriers, High Wycombe, Bucks

Homan Rahima, Health Strategy Group, Oxford House, Derbyshire Road, London E2 6HG

Kajiyona Agnes, West Hill College, Wooley Park Road, Birmingham

Kampani Agnes, Reading University, Sibby Hall, Redhatch Drive, Reading RG6 2QW

Kanyike Florence, Sibby Hall, Redhatch Drive, Reading

Karega Regina G, 230 Wokingham Road, Flat 4, Reading

Kulkarni Jacqueline, Foundation Development Worldwide, Brighthelm, North Road, Brighton

Kuma J S, Methodist International House, 68 Daisy Bank Road, Victoria Park, Manchester

Louseman Jahanara, Health Strategy Group, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London E2

Lubonde H D Tembo, Sibby Hall, Redhatch Drive, Earley, Reading

March Candida, OXFAM, GADU, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7JZ

Millican Juliet, 22 North Street, St Leonards, Sussex

Mkwayaya Constance, Westhill College, Wooley Park Road, Birmingham, Zambia

Mugyera Lucy, AERDD (Zambia)

Mwange-Bandere Masya, AERDD

Mwonya Joshua J, Elimhurst Hotel, 51 Church Road, Earley, Reading RG6 1Y (Kenya)

Nambo S P, 10 Hillside, Allofcroft Road, Reading RG1 5DJ

Odeurty Fiona Comfort, AERDD.

Parks Michelle, World Vision of Britain, Dychurch House, 8 Abington Street, Northampton

Parmaneer Ninja, University of Sussex 25A Grove Street, Brighton BN2 2NY

Payne Heather, 28 St John's Hill, Reading RG1 4EE

Rahana Anina A, AERDD

Rogers Alan, Education for Development

Sharma Meenaloshi, 1 Conway Crescent, Chadwell Heath, Essex RM6 4XP

Singyara Margaret West Hill College, Wooley Park Road, Birmingham (Zambia)

Smithells Jami, AERDD

Uddin Rahana, 80 Quebec Road, Hastings, Sussex

Veltheim Taina, c/o AERDD, Reading

Wardle Jackie, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Sussex House, 12 Upper Mall, Hammersmith London W6

Weaver Angela, West Hill College, Wooley Park Road, Birmingham

Winchurch Caroline, War on Want, 37 39 Great Guildford Street, London SW1 0ES

Yamani S A, 42 Zinian Street, Reading, Berkshire

Zea Myriam, Christian Aid, PO Box 100, London S1:1 (Colombia)