

A conference focusing on Women in Development issues was sponsored by MATCH International Centre, the University of Alberta's International Centre and the Centre for International Alternatives; the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development provided funding. This conference was held on the occasion of MATCH International's twentieth anniversary. The proceedings reflected on the achievements of the women's movement over the last twenty years and the challenges of the future. The conference aimed to educate participants about the situation of women from a global perspective and hoped to build on the commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Seventy-seven individuals, primarily women, registered for the conference.

The conference agenda and a description of speakers and sponsors is included as Appendix 1.

Mrs. Joyce Kadandara, a prominent Zimbabwean midwife and nurse provided the key note address. Mrs. Kadandara is the WHO's Focal Person on Women's Health and Development for the African Region. Her talk outlined the situation of African women and recommended ten areas of action. These recommendations are attached as Appendix 2.

Dr. Virginia Cawagas, an adjunct professor with the University of Alberta's Centre for International Education and Development, provided an overview of some of the development alternatives women have developed in the Asia region. She included examples from Sri Lanka, Thailand, China, the Philippines, Korea and Japan.

Dr. Cawagas noted the need for careful examination of the assumptions and theoretical paradigms around official development assistance (ODA). For instance, colonial discourse assumes the superiority of the West/North and portrays Third World women as victims of undifferentiated patriarchy and male domination. The liberal discourse on markets assumes the need for growth and free markets and the need to modernize women so they are not obstacles to the free market system. Liberal feminists call for more gender sensitive economic policies to achieve gender equity, but do not question modernization. Socialist feminists reduce discussion to class inequality and do not question the meaning of a good life.

ODA should use the empowerment approach. Women are victims of exploitation, but they are not helpless. ODA should not homogenize women.

Even in the South, women are distinguished by class, ethnicity and race. ODA must recognize the diversity of voices even from the same locale. Furthermore, ODA needs to consider international relationships rather than looking at other countries as though they need change.

Five women of diverse origins and backgrounds participated in a panel discussion reflecting on women's progress and challenges for the future. Dr. Christina Nsaliwa spoke about women in Malawi. She noted that substantial progress had been made due to the UN conferences on women. Women's organizations have been formed and women's issues are being discussed. The National Commission for Women in Development published a book, *Women and the Law*, which provided an overview of women's legal rights. However, there is a need for civic education as women do not know their rights. Furthermore, the way the laws are implemented need to be changed—for instance, though the law provides for 14 years imprisonment for rape, sentences are very lenient. Another pressing need is for AIDS prevention.

