

Women and Development: Reflections on the Past and Challenges for the Future
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University of Alberta - International Centre

Summary:

A conference held on the above topic reflected on the achievements of the women's movement over the last twenty years and the challenges of the future. Presentations were given on such topics as the situation of African women, development alternatives women have developed in Asia (with examples from Sri Lanka, Thailand, China, the Philippines, Korea and Japan), the progress and challenges for women in Malawi and El Salvador, indigenous women and their struggle for self-determination, and stereotypes about Muslim women which serves to sustain misunderstandings between them and Western feminists, among others. A 7 page extensive list of policy recommendations for Canada deals with specific issues related to women in development as well as with broader concerns. Some of the key recommendations are listed below:

Regarding women and economy,

- ensure that transnational companies adhere to international labour codes and standards;
- pressure all countries and transnational companies which export goods to Canada to apply fair and equitable labour laws protecting women;
- work towards amendments to international trade agreements to include the ability to impose tariffs on goods produced by transnational corporations under adverse work conditions;

Regarding education and training of women,

- enact policies and provide sufficient funds to provide literacy programs for women;
- support non-governmental organisations and civic education projects which educate women about democracy and their rights;

Regarding development and ODA,

- reverse cuts to ODA and begin to meet its obligation to increase ODA to 0.7% of GNP
- examine assumptions and theories of development and ODA to move away from policies and perspectives that adversely affect women;
- push for reform of the international financial institutions and structural adjustment programs;
- support ODA projects which empower women.

Other recommendations were grouped under the following headings: women and peace, women and poverty, women and health, institutional mechanisms, and funds and resources.