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EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT: THE INTERRELATED
GOALS OF IWY

A UNITED STATES VIEW

Designation of an International Women's Year is in itself an admission -- an admission that in the workings of most societies, past and present, tradition has accorded women an inferior role and status and that the time for change has come. It is also a signal that certainly at this point in history, failure to use women's full potential impedes the development not only of the societies themselves but of women as individuals, violating their human rights.

Women as individuals are fully and explicitly included in the international commitment to the fulfillment of human rights, - in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the Programme of Concerted International Action for the Advancement of Women. Yet the relation of human rights to women's involvement in development has to be clearly defined.

IWY presents an opportunity to make this definition. IWY has chosen, as two of its basic goals, equality for women, and their integration in development. These goals are inextricably interrelated. They rest upon the world commitment to human rights and human worth and to the development of societies in a manner which makes it possible to fulfill human aspirations and potentials. Each is indispensable to the other. Equality without development means shared misery and frustration. Development without equality may mean a worsened situation for many women, both those whose main sphere of activity is the home and those who work outside. Similarly, achieving one of the goals helps achieve the other. Development creates new situations and changes which make it possible for women to win a new, more equal status. And the full, equal participation of women in the development process can make the difference between success and failure of development itself.

Excluding women from full participation has contributed to the lack of success of some development efforts in the past, and constituted a waste of human resources. Failure to seek their counsel and to meet their needs has even created new problems which stand in the way of further development.

There is growing evidence that development in some countries or areas, far from contributing to the advance of women, has actually been taking place at their expense. Women who shared a traditional agrarian system find themselves displaced by modern agricultural techniques carried

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There is growing evidence that development in some countries or areas, far from contributing to the advance of women, has actually been taking place at their expense. Women who shared a traditional agrarian system find themselves displaced by modern agricultural techniques carried

out almost universally by men. Most women are left out of modern agricultural training and assistance programs even though, as in Africa for example, they may do as much as 70% of all agricultural work. Women also constitute the cheap and exploited labor force for new industries where neither law nor practice assures equality of pay for equal work or humane working conditions. Many join the rural exodus to the cities where, if they find jobs at all, they find virtually no child care facilities. For far too many women, in short, the principal meaning of "development" is "insecurity".

In the industrially developed countries, for their part, women know all too well that development does not automatically bring equality for women. In spite of some two hundred years of struggle for women's rights in industrialized countries, women are still largely absent from the centers of power in the economic and political structures of these societies. Their economic and social contribution through work in the home is largely unrecognized or undervalued. They still are concentrated disproportionately in low-paying jobs. Even their legal rights are still inferior to those of men in many places.

The IWY task is thus to promote equality and development as a single objective in terms of the particular stage of development and its political, social and economic system of each country. It is an essential part of the common effort to achieve a more just, humane, equitable and productive world order.

The campaign for women's rights has been part of the historic movement for human rights, first in industrial societies and then in the developing sections of the world. The 18th century Declaration of the Rights of Man was echoed in the demands of early European and American feminists in movements for the extension of education, abolition of slavery, and decent working conditions for the poor. More recently they are demanding rights once considered the privilege of an elite group -- the right to vote, economic opportunity, equal pay, equal legal and personal status. They are asking effective partnership and participation with men in centers of power where decisions are made -- participation sufficient in numbers, competence and support to command respect and attention. At the same time they are aware that political participation by women and the holding of public office is not just a matter of rights. It is essential in order to assure that the point of view and

voice of women is heard, that their experience, their wisdom and the needs of which they are aware may enter into the basic considerations on which social policies are based.

The importance of women's participation in development has begun to be recognized by international and national bodies. The declaration of the First Development Decade made no mention of women. The International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade, however, calls for the integration of women "in so far as possible", and the Programme of Concerted International Action for the Advancement of Women in 1970 placed the General Assembly of the U.N. on record with respect to the necessity for women's active and responsible role in development. An amendment to the United States foreign aid program in 1973 gave priority to programs promoting the fuller participation of women in development. The Committee on the Mid Term Review and Appraisal of the progress of the Second Development Decade has been asked to include an appraisal of the extent of the participation of women. IWY now reinforces this recognition that women must be active participants if development is to succeed.

Whatever the stage of development or the specific area of public policy, it is not enough, considering the background of traditional non-participation, that the doors to such participation now be open. Affirmative action to promote, support and insist upon the active presence of women is necessary.

Participation in decision-making should involve, not just outstanding women with special status, but homemakers and women heads of families as well as those women who together often make up large segments of some population - workers, peasant women, non-literate women, women of minority and indigenous groups, young women, old women. These voices need to be heard, their rights as people, their actual and potential contribution to society should be recognized. In virtually all societies today, whatever their institutional structure or stage of development, it will require new initiatives to bring this about. A major result of IWY should be to stimulate and support such initiatives.

Equality and development thus imply basic changes in institutional structures, national and international. They imply a new mentality which discards the stereotypes which separate the spheres of women and men and cast women in demeaning or limited roles. They require positive efforts

to build up new images of women in new roles, while searching out and discouraging the use of sex stereotypes in educational materials, public utterances and in all communications media. A major function of IWY is to arouse world-wide awareness of how negative stereotypes of women work against not only the advancement of women, but the development of societies in all parts of the globe.

The hangovers of past practices, conditions and attitudes constitute obstacles which challenge the determination and the ingenuity of all who seek to translate the aims of IWY into achievements. Old ways and viewpoints persist, deeply rooted in the minds and habits of both men and women in spite of new outlooks and new systems, the efforts to rally world opinion through international declarations, the impact of technology, and the examples offered by some countries in particular fields of action. A main task of IWY is to overcome these obstacles which stand in the way of achieving this goal.

We in the United States are committed to pursuit of the combined IWY goal of equality and development, although recognizing that achieving this long-run goal implies, for us as no doubt for others, modifications in many existing economic and social structures. Against this background, we support the UN efforts to bring about the full development of the potentials of women equally with men and their sharing of family, community, national and international responsibilities to create more just and equitable societies.

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