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**POLICY DIALOGUE AND  
GENDERED DEVELOPMENT  
INSTITUTIONAL AND  
IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS**

by Yusuf Bangura

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## ◆ Preface

The concept of policy dialogue has gained increasing currency in recent years as a mechanism for promoting equitable, violence-free and sustainable development. Yet despite its wide usage — by international agencies and governments — the concept of policy dialogue has escaped sustained analytical scrutiny. This paper makes a systematic attempt to unpack the basic elements of the concept and to analyse the conditions under which it is likely to be successfully applied as a framework for development that is gender equitable.

The first part of the paper discusses the basic elements of a dialogue process that are likely to determine its outcomes. Several issues are identified as important in this context: the nature of group participation, which has implications for definitions of policy agendas; the relations between group leaders (who participate) and their followers; the patterns of power distribution in dialogue settings; the nature of the dominant discourse; the number of themes that are sanctioned to be taken up in dialogue; and the nature and amount of resources that are needed to develop and sustain the dialogue. These characteristics form the basis for the discussion of models of policy dialogue that follows.

Five models of policy dialogue — corporatism, technocracy, power sharing, entryism, and global sustainable pluralism — are analysed in the second part of the paper. For each model the paper considers its strengths and weaknesses; the kinds of outcomes that can be associated with it; and how gender issues have fared or are likely to fare in each type. The paper highlights the gains that women made under the corporatist/welfare model — in terms of employment, incomes, participation in public institutions and social welfare — which owed more to the dynamics and potentially gender-friendly discourse of this model, than to feminist activism per se. In other words, women make gains when labour unions are strong and when the macro-economic discourse for bargaining is sensitive to equity issues, even though they are not explicitly targeted as the main beneficiaries of the policy contract. By contrast, the technocratic neo-liberal model, which gained prominence in the 1980s, has on balance produced uneven outcomes for women. With the erosion of welfare programmes in many countries, women have largely been the ones who pick up the burdens of social provisioning. Where women have made gains in employment, this has not been translated into reasonable rates of remuneration, job security and social support. The paper also highlights the view that although gender issues figure prominently in the model that is currently popular in the development discourse — global sustainable pluralism (or sustainable human development) — progress here is likely to be slow, less purposeful, and dependent upon large infusions of resources and external leverage. The absence of political leverage in this model should be seen as a serious limitation, and one which underlines the need to seek out additional strategies for gendered policy dialogues if progress is to be made in using this model.

The paper then discusses four main constraints to the institutionalization of policy dialogue for gendered development, with a special emphasis on developing countries. These constraints relate to the hegemony of the neo-liberal discourse on development, which, despite some marginal areas of convergence with feminist discourses (human capital development), remains fundamentally hostile to initiatives for gender equity; the effects of globalization on the balance of power

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among key institutions in international, national and local settings, which have, on balance, empowered less gender-sensitive institutions; the rigidities of national bureaucratic cultures and practices, which make them resistant to new issues; and the unequal pattern of development and contradictions between gender constituencies themselves.

The paper concludes with a set of policy suggestions for overcoming these four constraints.

This paper was prepared for the UNRISD/Centre for Policy Dialogue workshop, Working Towards a More Gender Equitable Macro-Economic Agenda (Rajendrapur, Bangladesh, 26-28 November 1996), carried out with financial support from the Directorate General of International Co-operation (the Netherlands), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The workshop took place within the UNRISD/UNDP research programme on **Technical Co-operation and Women's Lives**, co-ordinated at UNRISD by Shahra Razavi.

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Dharam Ghai  
Director

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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The concept of policy dialogue has gained much currency in recent years as a mechanism for promoting focused, equitable, violence-free and sustainable development. Yet, for all its use in numerous pronouncements by international agencies and governments, there has been no systematic attempt to unpack the basic elements of the concept, and to analyse the conditions under which it is likely to be successfully applied as a framework for development. Historical experience suggests that there are, in fact, a variety of models of policy dialogue with varying degrees of effectiveness and implications for gendered development; and that it is not always clear which model social activists and policy makers have in mind when they invoke the need for dialogue. There are also a formidable array of structural and ideological constraints that need to be taken into account if efforts to institutionalize the concept under changing global conditions are to yield lasting results. These constraints seem to affect the prospects for gendered policy-making much more seriously than other types of policy initiatives that have been adopted for solving social problems.

This paper aims to contribute to current efforts to clarify the concept of policy dialogue as it applies to issues of gender equity and participation. It first discusses the basic elements of the concept, including the multiple outcomes that can be associated with each element on the basis of the model of dialogue under scrutiny. The second part explores five models of policy dialogue — corporatism, technocracy, power sharing, entryism, and global sustainable pluralism; their different strengths and weaknesses; the kinds of outcomes (potential or real) that can be associated with each model; and how gender issues have fared or are likely to fare in each type. It highlights the view that although the model that is currently popular in the development discourse for mainstreaming gender into policy-making is that of global sustainable pluralism (or sustainable human development), progress here is likely to be slow, less purposeful, and dependent upon large infusions of resources and external leverage than in the hitherto successful corporatist model, which did not explicitly target women as the main beneficiaries of the policy contract.

Part three discusses four major constraints to the institutionalization of policy dialogue for gendered development, with a special, but not exclusive, focus on developing countries. These constraints relate to the hegemony of the neo-liberal discourse on development; the effects of globalization on the balance of power among key institutions in international, national and local settings; the rigidities of national bureaucratic cultures; and the unequal patterns of development and contradictions within gender constituencies.

Part four concludes with a set of policy suggestions for overcoming the constraints. It makes a case for flexible gendered theories or ideologies for promoting economic reforms and development; supporting secular movements whose progress is intimately linked to the pursuit of universal goals of equity; adopting focused, long-term perspectives and well-funded strategies to institutionalize gender in national bureaucracies; improving upon the density and social reach of gender social movements; and ensuring that issues of balanced representation and accountability are taken into account when policy dialogue teams are established in global and national settings.

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## 2. UNPACKING THE CONCEPT OF POLICY DIALOGUE

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Policy dialogue is defined as organized deliberation between two or more actors on the allocation of values that is likely to result in new policies or modification of existing ones. Implicit in the concept of policy dialogue is a clarification of the issues and an understanding of the interests and concerns of contending parties. A policy dialogue also presupposes readiness on the part of actors to accept a minimum level of compromise and accommodation, as well as some degree of relative autonomy for all actors. By seeking to avoid confrontations and unilaterally defined outcomes, policy dialogues can be very time consuming and may produce results that may not fully satisfy the wishes of participants.

Several issues seem to be important in discussing policy dialogues and their likely outcomes and gender implications. The first is the question of participation. Is participation restricted to special groups or is it open to all interested groups? How are special groups defined for purposes of participation? Participation may be restricted, for instance, to groups that have powerful influence on the functioning of economies, such as employers' federations and workers unions; to groups with specialized knowledge of public issues, such as technocrats and specially chosen intellectuals, journalists and public figures; or to groups that are likely to be affected by specific public policies regardless of their technical expertise on the subject or strategic locations in the political economy. The nature of group participation has implications for the definition of policy agendas.

Closely related to participation is a second issue: relations between group leaders and followers. To what extent are leaders representative of their followers? Are there structures that allow for the selection of leaders to represent followers in policy dialogues, or do actors assume leadership roles on the basis of their status, activism and knowledge of the issues? Are leaders able to regulate the behaviour of followers to accept binding agreements that may come out of dialogues? Conversely, are followers able to hold leaders accountable if they strike poor deals or are co-opted by dominant actors? Can dialogues regulate the ample "free-rider" or "principal-agency" problems that leaders often exploit in institutions? Relations between leaders and followers are important in explaining the organizational settings of policy dialogues and the way power is likely to be used or not used in the policy process. As we shall see, the corporatist model seems to be much better structured for dialogue than, for instance, the global sustainable pluralist, or human development, models.

A third issue relates to the relative distribution of power in dialogue settings. This can vary tremendously. Its understanding is important in assessing likely policy outcomes. Three main patterns of power distribution can be identified: all actors are equally strong or enjoy recognition of formal equality; one or a few actors are stronger than others; and all key actors are equally weak and require external stimulus and protection to keep dialogues going. The strong/strong pattern has the potential to sustain dialogue if actors can recognize and be made to enjoy win/win outcomes as a result of their participation in the dialogue process. As we shall see, the corporatist model, which distributes benefits to all participating actors, seems to support this proposition. The strong/weak pattern may result in limited or marginal changes in a policy framework that may be initiated by a strong actor.



The technocracy, and “entryism” or Women in Development (WID), models may help to illustrate this point. The weak/weak pattern may produce outcomes that are uncertain, unstable and ineffective unless win/win scenarios under generalized weakness can be created and backed by massive infusions of resources and external support. The power sharing model will be instructive in this case.

A fourth issue is the constraining effect of the dominant discourse for dialogue. Is this discourse ideological or is it eclectic? By ideological discourse is meant a discourse that does not allow for a questioning of the fundamentals of a policy framework, where opposing parties can only negotiate change at the margins of the policy. We cite the neo-liberal policy framework in the technocratic model as an example. By eclectic is meant a discourse that is sufficiently open to accommodate the competing interests of actors in the fundamentals of a policy framework even if such a framework may have been derived from an ideological reading of society. The Keynesian policy framework in the corporatist model is a good case in point. The nature of dominant discourses is central to an understanding of the essence of dialogue models and is likely to determine substantially the kinds of progress groups in dialogue are likely to make in changing the direction and content of specific policies.

Closely related to the question of discourse is a fifth issue — the number of themes that are sanctioned to be taken up in dialogue. These can vary from single issues, such as reconciliation and macro-economic stabilization, as in the power sharing and technocracy models; to a set of strategic issues like wages, productivity, employment and profitability as in the corporatist model; and to multiple sets of issues that cover all major facets of public life as in the global sustainable pluralist and WID or “entryism” models. A sixth characteristic deals with the medium in which dialogue takes place. Does this occur within existing bureaucracies, as in the WID and technocracy models, for instance; or does dialogue require or result in the establishment of special institutions within and outside the bureaucracy, as in the corporatist and power sharing models? Indeed, does the nature of change advocated require the establishment of multiple mediums that transcend national public bureaucracies, as in the global sustainable pluralist model? The medium of dialogue can influence the extent to which issues can be transformed into policies for effective implementation. It is important to distinguish between open-ended or forum-type dialogues from authoritative dialogues that directly impact upon the policy process. Political liberalization in much of the world has been accompanied by a wide variety of dialogue systems which are not tied to state level decisions. These are often promoted by research centres or institutes, and organizations in civil society. They often aim to clarify issues and strengthen the knowledge base of individuals who may seek to influence the policy-making process.

A seventh issue deals with the nature and amount of resources that are required to develop and sustain dialogue. This depends upon the resource endowments of respective actors, the nature and speed of change sought, and the distribution of power among groups. Fewer resources for dialogue are required in the corporatist model of formal equality among parties, where even subordinated actors can develop negotiating capacities through autonomous and self-financing technical expertise. More resources are required in both the global sustainable pluralist and power sharing models — the first because of the wide-ranging nature of the changes sought and the relative weakness of the actors that are likely to be the

chief beneficiaries of change; and the second because of the generalized weakness of all key actors. A final, eighth, point on characteristics deals with the duration of dialogues — whether they are short- or long-term, intermittent or continuous. These eight characteristics and two additional issues on outcomes and gender effects are summarized in Box 1, and form the basis for the discussion on models of policy dialogue in the next section.

**Box 1**  
**Conceptual issues for analysing models of public policy dialogue**

Who participates?	→	→	→	special groups/open to all
Relations between group leaders and followers	→	→	→	disciplined/flexible
Relative power of participants	→	→	→	equally strong/ strong-weak/equally weak
Issues for dialogue	→	→	→	single/strategic set/ multiple
Discourse framework	→	→	→	ideological/eclectic
Institutions for dialogue	→	→	→	established bureaucracy/ special institutions/diffuse
Public resources for dialogue	→	→	→	limited/large
Duration of dialogue	→	→	→	short-term/long-term intermittent/continuous
General outcomes	→	→	→	effective/ambiguous
Gender outcomes	→	→	→	positive/negative/ ambiguous

## 3. MODELS OF POLICY DIALOGUE

### ◆ 3.1 Corporatism

There is a wide variety of corporatist models, spanning both developed and developing countries (Goldthorpe, 1984; Cawson, 1989; Schmitter, 1982; Offe, 1981; Hashim, 1994). These often focus on macro-, sectoral and micro-level issues and use centralized or flexible institutional frameworks for promoting dialogue and bargaining. We shall be concerned mainly with the corporatist régimes of Western liberal societies, which produced the welfare states of the post-war period. These régimes evolved in a context of what has been called “a historic class compromise” for balancing the conflicting interests of capital, labour and the state (Habermas, 1976). In general, corporatism refers to a system for managing socio-economic conflicts in which organized interests are brought into the governmental policy-making process to facilitate debate, bargaining and compromise over key issues that affect the performance of the macro-economy, the livelihoods of workers, and the process of industrial accumulation. In the liberal

democratic settings in which these régimes were nurtured, contending actors enjoyed a high degree of relative autonomy and certain rights of organization and expression that are fundamental to the functioning of democratic societies.

In the corporatist model of Western Europe, the key actors are organized labour, employers' federations and governments. In general, participation is not open to other pressure groups irrespective of whether contested issues and corporatist deals or outcomes affect their interests or life chances. In this model, labour is primarily concerned about gains to be made in the fields of wages, employment, social security, working hours and industrial safety. Capital is driven by the need to increase the productivity of labour, maximize profit, expand markets and reduce the burden of taxation and regulation on private enterprise. Governments seek to manage the macro-economy to prevent recessions, inflation and balance of payments crises, as well as to raise revenue for various socio-economic programmes.

Even though labour is subordinated to capital in the process of production and, therefore, commands fewer resources than capital in defending its corporate interests, both are accorded equal rights and voice in the framework for dialogue and bargaining. The same is true of government, which is expected to treat both labour and capital as equal partners, even though government has a much larger mandate and legitimacy to govern than the others do not. Despite this formal equality among the three actors, studies of corporatism have shown that the state enjoys a high degree of relative autonomy, which enables it to perform its crucial role of interest intermediation and to push through its national agenda through various techniques of apportioning rewards and punishments, and building cross-sectoral and cross-national alliances and constituencies (Cawson, 1989; Offe, 1981; Hashim, 1994). However, there is consensus in the literature that the state is able to do this only when it respects the rights of its corporatist partners and makes reasonable concessions to them, which they can sell to their respective constituencies.

Indeed, one major condition attached to the formal equality of actors in the dialogue process is the expectation that they are able to defend corporatist outcomes to their respective memberships. Thus, participation in policy-making by unelected actors may be regarded as a privilege, which they would continue to enjoy only if they honoured agreements and regulated the behaviour of members. In many corporatist settings in Western Europe, the need to honour agreements to remain privileged players in the policy process can sometimes lead to high-handed or non-democratic methods against militants in the rank and file membership. Policy dialogues often take place in specially constituted bodies, such as those dealing with productivity and incomes; tripartite advisory boards or commissions; boards of economic co-ordination and contract committees (as in Norway); economic planning councils, joint committees for wages and prices (as in Austria); and summit meetings of government, employers and labour (as in Sweden) (Lehmbruch, 1984; Crouch, 1977). These may be backed by special institutions for the settlement of disputes, such as mediation committees and industrial courts. Where corporatism is highly developed, as in the Scandinavian countries and Germany, budget preparations may be preceded by discussions with labour leaders and industrial managers. The institutionalization of corporatist dialogues is often buttressed by an interlocking set of organizations that links unions with political parties. Corporatist practices can even be extended to the factory level (co-

determination) where employers and union leaders sit as “equals” on company boards to discuss industrial plans, as in Germany and Sweden, for instance.

Dialogue and bargaining are restricted to a relatively limited but strategic set of economic questions: wage settlements and productivity, employment, and profits. The aim is to ensure that settlements are in line with the general health of the economy. In some situations, popular in Germany in the 1960s and 1970s, voluntary wage restraint is practised by unions without any formal negotiation with employers and government. Corporate actors are expected to read correctly the linkages between wages, profits, investment and employment. Government provides data on the economy and actors inform each other about their expectations and plans. This was not always successful, as actors did not always act according to the expectations of government. Thus social contracts or package deals or pacts became popular in a number of countries in the 1970s — tying wage restraints to income transfers and tax policies (Lehmbruch, 1984).

Social welfare provisioning, though part of the historic class compromise, does not directly feature in corporatist dialogues, although crises in social policy may catapult such issues into the corporatist bargaining process, as in the health policy debate in Germany in the late 1970s, or the struggles waged by public sector unions in France in 1996 over retirement age and social security. In general, social policy is taken up by political parties, citizen groups and unions in specific workplaces, and is a product of a wider consensus on social solidarity, which post-war governments, especially those with a strong social democratic tradition, had developed to attack poverty and exclusion and to stave off potential civil unrest. The two elements — corporatism and social solidarity — are supported by a discourse that allows for the emergence of a positive synergy of interests in the areas of equity, social justice and group participation. It can be argued that the strength of the corporatist model lies in the flexible character of its discourse — its ability to appeal to, and serve even if unequally, the interests of all corporatist partners simultaneously.

Keynesian economic theory provides the framework for the discourse in the corporatist model. The theory accords much significance to state intervention, as a primary mechanism to correct market failures or business cycles, which can produce recessions or inflation, by purposeful use of tax policies or government expenditure. As the goal of full employment is part of the policy apparatus of Keynesian theory, labour’s interests are structurally built into the discourse that shapes the way all actors process their claims. In other words, the value of full employment is not something that labour has to fight to enforce, since it has the support of the dominant theory that informs the strategies of the state and employers themselves. For countries that embraced the social democratic model of welfare provisioning, such as those in Scandinavia, the pursuit of an active labour policy was indeed seen as a way of reducing the costs of financing their welfare programmes and in defending their humanist beliefs in promoting united and equal societies (Esping-Andersen and Mickelwright, 1991; Esping-Andersen, 1996). Also, labour did not have to depend upon state financial or technical support to participate in dialogue since the industrial check-off system, which the state and employers honoured, ensured that enough funds could be raised from the membership of the labour movement to build up the competence and capability of labour.

The outcomes of the corporatist model could be described as truly outstanding for much of the post-war period, until its success revealed basic structural contradictions and problems — the tendency to produce large budget deficits, high and persistent inflation rates, rigid labour markets, and interest group oligarchies — and opened the way for conservatives to successfully launch a neo-liberal assault on the model. Indeed, unemployment in much of Western Europe and North America was on average less than 4 per cent for the period up to 1973, and in some countries, such as Sweden, Norway, Austria and Switzerland unemployment was even less than 1 per cent of the labour force; the economies experienced average growth rates of more than 5 per cent; and there was a positive rate of income growth for all income groups during the same period. Indeed, Cameron's very rich study in the 1980s showed that countries with relatively high unemployment rates — Italy, Canada, Ireland, the United States, Britain and Australia — experienced relatively high levels of strike activity during the period; and that high levels of strike activity were also positively correlated with high rates of change in earnings and prices. In contrast, countries with low levels of unemployment — Switzerland, Japan, Austria, Norway, Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands — experienced low levels of strike activity, low rates of increase in nominal incomes and low rates of change in prices. Cameron concluded that where full employment was pursued as a goal, labour was likely to be very quiescent — earnings and prices were likely to rise only modestly; where the goal of full employment was not attained, labour was likely to adopt a militant posture — and earnings and prices were likely to rise, leading to further unemployment (Cameron, 1984). It seemed that all three actors were basically satisfied with the broad outcomes of the model, even though they hardly agreed on the relative distribution of the benefits. Women, like other social groups, also benefited a lot from this model in terms of employment, incomes, participation in public institutions, and social welfare.

Much has been written about the powerful roles of gender movements in securing the gains that women made in the corporatist/welfare models of Western societies. The activities of these movements should not be underestimated. It seems, however, that success owed more to the dynamics and potentially gender-friendly discourse of the corporatist/welfare model than to gender activism per se. The corporatist/welfarist agenda, it seems, helped to make the work of gender activists coherent and effective. A comparison of the gender movements in the United States and Scandinavia would show that the movements in Scandinavia were not better organized, vocal or influential than those in the United States. Indeed, the WID initiative owed its origin to the militant work of the US feminist movement (Razavi and Miller, 1995a).

Yet, even though the UNDP-defined Gender Development Indicators (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM) are high in both, the Scandinavian countries perform much better than the United States in these indicators, especially in the GEM. The United States is ranked second in the Human Development Indicators (HDI), but fourth in GDI and ninth in GEM. Indeed, the first four countries in GEM are the three Scandinavian countries plus Finland. These countries also have the most advanced model of corporatism and welfare of all Western societies. Unionized labour, a critical condition for corporatism, is also much higher in the Scandinavian countries than in the United States. Whereas unionized labour fell from 23 per cent to 16 per cent in the United States from 1970 to 1990, it grew from 51 per cent to 56 per cent in Norway, 51 per cent to 71

per cent in Finland, 68 per cent to 83 per cent in Sweden, and 60 per cent to 71 per cent in Denmark over the same period (UNDP, 1996). The conclusion we may draw from this is that women make gains when labour unions are strong and when the macro-economic discourse for bargaining is sensitive to equity issues. We should note, of course, that the Nordic countries are much more culturally homogeneous than the United States, and may therefore be better positioned to support equity-focused programmes.

**Table 1**  
**The HDI, GDI and GEM ranks of countries with strong gender movements**

	HDI	GDI	GEM
<b>USA</b>	2	4	9
<b>Norway</b>	5	3	1
<b>Finland</b>	6	5	4
<b>Sweden</b>	9	1	2
<b>Denmark</b>	17	7	3

Source: UNDP, 1996.

Note: Number of countries for HDI: 174; number of countries for GDI: 137; number of countries for GEM: 104. The HDI index relies on data on literacy, life expectancy and income per capita. GDI uses the same data but takes gender differences in all three indicators into account. GEM uses data based on women's share of parliamentary representation, administrative and managerial positions, and professional and technical positions in political and economic areas of activity.

### ◆ 3.2 Technocracy

The technocracy model of policy dialogue is the direct antithesis of the corporatist model. It questions, very fundamentally, the theoretical discourse of Keynesianism and the corporatist agenda of involving vested interests in the policy-making process. The technocratic model we wish to address is neo-liberal. It accords substantial weight to market forces in the allocation of resources. It holds corporatism and Keynesianism largely responsible for the economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s — such as the unfettered expansion of the state and its attendant budget deficits and high inflation rates, the persistence of high labour returns in situations of low productivity, the undemocratic power and influence that labour leaders enjoyed in government, and the crowding out of the private sector by government in the allocation of investment funds. As the theory explains it, the net effect has been that the private sector has failed to carry out meaningful investments, leading to slow growth, and to recessions occurring in the midst of inflationary periods.

Therefore, the goal of public policy should be to eliminate economic distortions, rigidities and deficits; roll back the state; beat back the power of “big union battalions”; and allow the market to determine the dynamics of economic activities. Employment, which is a central feature of the corporatist model, is dethroned from the centre stage of macro-economic policy. In other words, it is no longer the purpose of economic policy to pursue full employment — this becomes a micro-level concern, to be achieved mainly by launching special work and training programmes for the unemployed (Standing, 1991). Instead, economic policy should now be concerned with problems of inflation and efficiency.

The main actors expected to implement this neo-liberal revolution are not vested interests but technocrats in governments and the international financial institutions who have specialist knowledge about how the macro-economy operates, and strong loyalty to the values of neo-liberalism. It is assumed that vested interests or lay groups in society are unlikely to grasp the “scientific” or objective basis of the theory and how its unfettered application will benefit not only the economy but also most social groups in the long run. It has now been established that pressures of globalization, mounting debt, and the long reign of the Thatcher and Reagan years in government — not the intrinsic truth of the theory — were decisive in shifting the balance of power against corporatism and Keynesianism in the global development agenda (Krugman, 1994; Hutton, 1995; UNRISD, 1995). These changes gave tremendous power to the IMF and the World Bank in spearheading the neo-liberal revolution in much of the developing world, which faced serious economic problems in the 1970s and 1980s.

Even though the key actors are expected to enjoy formally equal relations — indeed, governments are presumed to be sovereign powers that should not be accountable to external actors — the financial weakness of governments, and the fact that the main purpose of dialogue is to secure IMF/World Bank loans, gives substantial powers to these institutions, and not to governments. Governments may have access to loans only when they satisfy certain conditions, which are quantitatively spelled out with time frames, and systematically monitored. These may cover a whole range of macro-economic issues — such as reduction of budget deficits, promotion of flexible or market-determined exchange rates, opening up of economies to international competition, privatization, and sectoral reforms. The main aim is, however, to stabilize the crisis economies and enthrone market instruments in economic decision-making.

Dialogue takes place both in Washington, where the creditor institutions are located, and in debtor countries, and often involves officials of ministries of finance, central banks, and staff in other relevant ministries or institutions with expertise on the subject. The Washington institutions often post experts to work in key ministries of debtor countries to facilitate the process of monitoring and to influence the negotiating stand of country officials. In a good number of cases, training is given to national staff so that they can be fully conversant with the language and world view of the creditor institutions. The purpose is to reduce areas of conflict between debtor governments and the creditor institutions. Loans could be discontinued if debtor governments failed to honour the loan conditions (Mosley et al., 1991). Because of the lopsided nature of the relationship between debtor governments and the creditor institutions, local officials sometimes report each other to these institutions in struggles for positions and resources in their respective bureaucracies. Governments are expected to be tough with vested interests, and local opposition in general, in carrying out reforms and meeting targets agreed upon in the policy dialogue (Haggard et al., 1995). An image of Machiavelism, not dialogue and compromise as in the corporatist model, is conveyed in strategies for dealing with national opposition groups. In this respect, the technocratic model is much more ideological and rigorous than the corporatist model.

The overall outcomes of the technocracy model have been varied, and in several cases uneven or even contradictory. The belief in the need to take markets seriously, reduce deficits, and promote the values of competition and efficiency is

now fairly widespread in most countries that have participated in IMF/World Bank policy dialogues. Inflation has also been brought under control in most Western economies — there is even talk of attaining zero inflation in some countries. Also, the political coalitions that sustained the corporatist model and its Third World varieties have been dissolved or undermined in most countries. It is interesting to note, however, that some of these corporatist coalitions or pacts are either being resurrected or reformed, to support adjustment programmes, especially in countries where programme implementation has been difficult. Indeed, success has been very uneven in the area of programme implementation. Reforms have been more systematically carried out on exchange rates, for instance, than on trade liberalization and institutional issues like parastatal restructuring, privatization and financial sector reforms (Mosley et al., 1991; MacCleary, 1989; Haggard et al., 1995). On a comparative basis, Latin America has made more progress in these areas of reform than Africa and Eastern Europe, where actual reforms are only beginning to be applied. And even though budget deficits have, in the main, tended to be closely monitored and controlled, results have varied considerably across countries and regions. Withdrawal of subsidies on basic commodities is often hotly contested — in some cases violently.

Economic performance has also been uneven. Latin America experienced reasonable growth in the late 1980s and early 1990s, only for that growth to falter in a number of countries in the mid-1990s. Much of Africa failed to grow, or experienced only marginal growth, in the 1980s, although a few countries have started to register reasonable growth in the 1990s. The picture in Eastern Europe is still very unstable — economic outputs there have rapidly declined for most countries despite the positive signs of recovery that have been shown by a few others. In the case of Western Europe, unemployment, which averages about 10 per cent, is currently seen as a major economic problem, with implications for social integration and stability. Serious concerns have been expressed about the emergence of the “new poor” in these countries, and the failure of the bottom 20 per cent of the population to benefit from market reforms (Hutton, 1995; Krugman, 1994). There has been radical restructuring of welfare programmes in a number of Western countries and modest reforms in others, with policy tending to tilt away from the universalistic principles that underpinned the corporatist model to selectivity and greater use of markets to determine access to services — even though there is considerable variation in the pattern of change across countries (Esping-Andersen, 1994); and social conditions have deteriorated in poor adjusting countries because of cutbacks in government spending, retrenchment and declines in real wages.

On balance, and relying on scattered case study evidence, the effects on gender have been uneven, and in many cases negative, with even positive outcomes producing contradictory results. For instance, the erosion of welfare programmes in the transition to market economies in Eastern Europe has undermined gains which women made in child birth grants, child care leave, child nursing benefits, universal child allowances, benefits for single parent and large families, and child care services (Cornia, 1991). Also in Western Europe, changes in insurance benefits are likely to affect women negatively, especially in the Scandinavian countries where women form a very high proportion of the public sector work force, where previously high insurance benefits that are tied to employment records are being reviewed downwards, and where workers have suffered the brunt of state sector retrenchment (Esping-Andersen, 1994). Women in Western Europe



have, however, made gains in the area of employment as a result of industrial policies of sub-contracting and hiring of short-term staff on flexible hours of work, which women could combine with household work. But these jobs are poorly paid and lack sufficient social and other types of security that are associated with permanent employment. The same holds for some of the export processing zones in countries like Morocco, Bangladesh, India and the Philippines, where gains in female employment do not translate into reasonable rates of remuneration, job security and social support.

Public sector retrenchment has, indeed, affected women disproportionately, especially in Nordic countries, because of women's heavy concentration in that sector. Reductions in government expenditure and in incomes have tended to affect the social sectors negatively despite attempts to protect them in many adjusting countries. Case studies suggest that women have largely been the ones who pick up the burdens of social provisioning, as households resort to traditional methods of social security. Hopefully, the development of the GDI and GEM in the Human Development Reports of 1995 and 1996 will encourage governments and statistical agencies to make data on socio-economic development and participation in public institutions more gender sensitive. Such time series data, if and when they become available, would help us to have a better picture of the extent to which women have gained or lost under the technocratic model of policy dialogue for structural adjustment.

### ◆ 3.3 Power Sharing

The power sharing model is well entrenched in several Western multi-cultural or religiously divided societies, such as Switzerland, Belgium, Austria and the Netherlands. It has also been in existence in a few multi-ethnic developing countries, such as Malaysia and Lebanon, although less successfully so in the latter. Power sharing refers to a system of political organization that allows leaders of competing groups to share the commanding heights of politics, in such institutions as the executive, bureaucratic, legislative and coercive arms of government. It seeks to prevent majority or powerful groups from imposing zero-sum outcomes on minorities, encourage all groups to develop a sense of responsibility towards the political system, minimize conflicts and maintain stability. Power sharing arrangements are underpinned by constitutional, electoral and redistributive rules of political participation (Horowitz, 1985; Lijphart, 1977). The model is similar to corporatism, since its basic working principles are the promotion of compromise and stability. It differs, however, from corporatism in the crucial area of the management of power. Whereas the corporatist model is primarily concerned with the regulation of relations between groups with conflicting claims on the economy, in the power sharing model regulation is mainly about political power.

The high incidence of civil wars in polarized societies in Africa, Asia, Central America and Eastern Europe has given considerable impetus to the concept of power sharing among development agencies. It is increasingly seen as a practical way of resolving conflicts and restoring social and political stability in war-torn countries and regions. These wars are often unwinnable, are devoid of ideology, and are prone to dissolve into fragmented group battles and chaos. They inflict considerable pain and suffering on civilians, and drain the national resources of affected countries (UNRISD, 1995). Working out arrangements that can distribute

power, through a process of dialogue, among warring parties in mutually acceptable ways have therefore become a major imperative in contemporary development strategies. Earlier discourses on democratization, which paid scant attention to distributional issues, has given way to questions of crafting appropriate institutions that are not only democratic but also inclusive in terms of how democratic institutions relate to the major cleavages in society.

The major actors in contemporary power sharing arrangements are warring parties, usually incumbent governments and well-armed rebel groups. However, where governments have ceased to exist, such as in Liberia, Somalia and Afghanistan, power sharing arrangements may largely be about the sharing of power among armed rebel groups. Armed groups and incumbent governments usually agree to participate in dialogue, leading to the creation of power sharing governments, when there are stalemates, which no party thinks it can influence decisively or quickly. Parties, therefore, go into dialogue from positions of relative weakness. External actors, such as the United Nations; regional organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Organization of African Unity (OAU); donor governments; neighbouring countries; the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of conflict resolution play major roles in getting the warring parties to dialogue. External actors are often responsible for working out the modalities for power sharing, restructuring or creating the institutions in which power should be redistributed, and funding the process of dialogue and post-war reconstruction. Thus, unlike the corporatist model where all actors are relatively strong and autonomous, in the power sharing model external actors are required to help convert national weak-weak situations into strong-strong and win-win outcomes. The one major exception to this rule is the South African transition programme, which was largely managed by national actors and produced a unique system of power sharing.

In general, however, the dialogue process for power sharing requires substantial amounts of resources. Sometimes, a dialogue process may be funded largely by one country, as in the US\$ 2 billion peace initiative for Cambodia — most of which was provided by Japan, although the actual process of implementation was handled by the United Nations (Utting, 1994). The United States, acting through NATO, imposed order in Bosnia and encouraged the warring factions to engage in dialogue, which has led to a power sharing political system in which the presidency of the republic would rotate every two years among the three main ethnic warlords who have now been converted into politicians. Nigeria, through ECOWAS, took the initiative in Liberia in trying to get the warring factions to share power in an interim government (Sesay, 1996).

In other cases, one or two countries may take the lead in forming a consultative group of donors to help raise funds for a particular war-torn country, such as Italy's role in the consultative group of donors (the United States, Germany, Japan, Spain, Canada, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands ) that resulted in El Salvador being able to receive about US\$ 400 million a year between the time the peace accord was signed in 1992, and 1995 (Boyce, 1995). Another arrangement is for war-torn governments themselves to take the lead in launching direct appeals to the donor community, often with the help of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs — a road which Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Angola and Eritrea have chosen. Such appeals

usually take place in Geneva and New York, the seats of international diplomacy. Where external support is weak or funds are inadequate to build confidence and sustain dialogue, power sharing arrangements may collapse, as the experience of Liberia in 1996 and that of Angola in 1991 have shown.

The discourse for power sharing is generally eclectic, and focuses largely on political questions of participation, immunity, the rule of law and compensation. Even in cases where ideology may have been central to the political discourse of régimes or rebel groups, as in Mozambique, El Salvador and Cambodia, the goal of dialogue is to water down ideologies and get parties to be pragmatic and flexible when they make claims or defend positions. Dialogue may focus on any number of issues, such as reform of the police, military and intelligence systems; the integration of ex-combatants into national armies, or the creation of entirely new armies; the granting of immunity to those who have committed atrocities; the establishment of special commissions to probe past atrocities and to offer compensation to victims; the reform of electoral arrangements to enable all groups to enjoy fair chances of representation in parliament and, if necessary, in national and regional governments; reform of the judiciary; and the resettlement of demobilized combatants in civil society.

It is difficult to provide an objective assessment of current power sharing arrangements, because the time frame that is available to do this is rather short. However, for all it is worth, they seem to have restored modest stability in Bosnia, Mozambique, El Salvador, Cambodia and South Africa. They have had a highly unstable experience in Liberia and Northern Ireland, and the international community seems unable to impose them in the Great Lakes region of Africa, Somalia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Sudan. They require heavy infusions of resources and committed, but neutral, external backers to sustain them. Since the power sharing model seeks to bring about new political settlements by changing institutional behaviour, it may suffer from very serious bureaucratic constraints (to be discussed in section 4.3), requiring a much longer period to resolve than, perhaps, current supporters may have factored into their strategies.

The power sharing model of conflict resolution is, in general, gender-blind, since the main goal of all actors — local as well as international — is to end conflicts, restore order, and get the basic institutions of societies to function again. Gender issues have hardly featured in any of the high-level political settlements that have emerged out of recent conflicts, even though women have been among the main victims of such conflicts: they are often abducted to find and prepare food for rebel groups, fight in wars that they may not fully understand or control, take part in high risk suicide missions (as in Sri Lanka), and act as mistresses for, or sex objects for abuse by, armed male groups and their commanders. For instance, the Sierra Leone Peace Agreement of 30 November 1996 does not even contain a single reference to women or gender questions despite the very high costs of the war on women and the major roles which they played in campaigns for peace and democracy (Peace Agreement, 1996). However, because of the general breakdown of national institutions and the heavy involvement of external actors in the management of peace and reconstruction, considerable scope has been created for the advancement of gender issues in areas such as relief, welfare, education, health, support for productive employment, and in campaigns to raise the level of female representation in political institutions.

NGOs, donor agencies and international organizations have tried to push gender issues in their various reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes. A number of national and local level women's organizations have also sprung up to take up the challenge. For instance, the current chair of the Council of State of Liberia's interim government of armed factions, Ruth Perry, has been an active member of the Liberian Women's Initiative, which has sponsored various initiatives since 1994 to end that country's war. Internally displaced people's camps in the Western Area of Sierra Leone have camp committees of both male and female representatives for all districts that have been affected by the war. NGOs and international agencies are very active in the camps. It seems that having women on camp committees is a condition for access to donor support. The key question is what happened when external support fizzled out before women were in a position to defend recent gains.

One fundamental weakness of these efforts is that the power sharing model does not address economic stabilization and adjustment issues, which remain the prerogative of the IMF and the World Bank (Boyce, 1995; Wood and Segovia, 1995; Wuyts, 1995). Thus, even though, like corporatism, the concept of power sharing seeks to use equity issues to change the way conflict-ridden societies are organized, its neglect of economics renders it inappropriate, in its current form, as a strategy for promoting gendered development.

### ◆ 3.4 Entryism

Entryism is a political strategy employed by marginal activist groups to penetrate, and eventually take over, key institutions of society, or to get such institutions to adopt the groups' political agendas. Such groups often seek to introduce radical changes in society, but adopt the strategy of penetration because of their general weakness, and realization that independent forms of organization, advocacy and mobilization would not secure desired objectives. The concept gained currency among Marxist political circles in the post-war period as some militant groups, frustrated by what they saw as the conservatism of their societies, felt that the best way to improve the prospects for socialist transformation was to enter established social democratic parties and work diligently towards the goal of taking them over and implementing their radical agendas. Militant religious movements have also in recent years used similar methods to pursue their goals of Islamic or Christian fundamentalist state power.

Efforts to promote the Women in Development/Gender and Development (WID/GAD)<sup>1</sup> agenda in international and national bureaucracies could be likened to the political strategy of entryism. Various international conferences on women, starting from the 1975 World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico and culminating with the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, have helped to give conceptual clarity to issues of gender inequalities and discrimination, and to evolve strategies for overcoming them. Much of the debate, as has been brilliantly summarized by Razavi and Miller (1995a and b), has focused on questions of social justice and equity — improving women's educational and employment opportunities, increasing their access to health and welfare services, and raising their participation levels in social and political

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<sup>1</sup> This section relies on works by S. Razavi and C. Miller (1995a and b); A.M. Goetz, 1995; N. Kardam, 1993; K. Staudt, 1990; and M. Sawer, 1996.

institutions. Economic efficiency arguments have also been linked to the pursuit of equity issues, as it is argued that women can immensely contribute to the development process if the barriers to their full participation are eliminated. Central to the WID/GAD initiative is a strategy of “selling” gender issues to policy makers in both international and national bureaucracies through establishment of WID machineries in such institutions. Through a process of entering what are regarded as gender-insensitive bureaucracies, and gradually engaging key decision making actors in a process of dialogue, it is felt that the WID/GAD agenda will not only change major development strategies, but that over time it will become routinized in the daily practices of bureaucratic actors.

WID/GAD units to promote gendered development have been established in several developed and developing countries as well as in key international agencies. The main actors are feminist bureaucrats, or “femocrats”<sup>2</sup> (a concept being popularized by Australian feminists), male governmental and bureaucratic allies, and key decision-making agents. Some units are even “staffed and headed by men who are often not gender-sensitive”, however (Goetz, 1995). There are very tenuous links between femocrats and their base constituencies, unlike in the corporatist and power sharing models, in which groups have strong links with their outside membership. Femocrats are expected to behave as “bureaucrats”, by upholding the rules and norms of their respective institutions, and by insulating their work from much of the politics of the wider society. They cannot, therefore, actively mobilize their gender constituencies to exert pressure on decision makers when things go wrong. In short, femocrats are not put in bureaucracies by their gender constituencies and, therefore, are not mandated to negotiate on their behalf. Instead, femocrats mainly rely on their skills of persuasion, moral suasion and the goodwill of fellow bureaucrats to get things done, although opportunities for linking up with wider social constituencies can be created when new régimes embrace the rhetoric of popular mobilization as a strategy for securing legitimacy — as has happened in Uganda, for instance, under Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement and government.

WID/GAD units for the promotion of dialogue and gendered development do not have a single institutional home. They have been located in ministries of social welfare, planning, or youth and community development; offices of presidents or prime ministers; or in special ministries of women and children’s affairs. WID/GAD units have developed a variety of instruments for influencing public policy, such as gender-sensitive policy guidelines, plans and statements; checklists of critical issues to be monitored; the setting up of inter-ministerial committees; and gender training schemes. Work in these areas is expected to help shape debates on gender issues across the entire spectrum of policy-making and implementation.

As UNRISD studies have shown, the technical skills of feminist bureaucrats in the crucial areas of policy and project analysis are generally poor. Gender-inspired statements tend to be couched in very general terms, making it difficult to assess the gender implications of new policies and proposals right through the various stages of the budgetary process. Case studies in Mali, Jamaica, Chile, Uganda, Morocco and Bangladesh suggest that WID/GAD units tend to be marginalized in national bureaucracies even in situations where they receive high-profile

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<sup>2</sup> See M. Sawyer, 1996.

treatment, as in Uganda, Chile and Jamaica, for instance. Stigmatization; under-funding; lack of commitment by bureaucrats and, in some cases, even by feminist advocates; and limited rewards to attract ambitious and highly trained personnel to the work of WID were some of the problems highlighted in the six UNRISD country studies. Considerable resources are, therefore, required to improve upon the technical competence of femocrats through training workshops, to review and raise the bureaucratic incentive structures in favour of WID, and to support the sensitization and analytical work of femocrats.

### ◆ 3.5 Global Sustainable Pluralism

The global sustainable pluralist model reflects recent efforts by the world community to create a new global socio-economic and political order that would be sensitive to the basic needs and diversity of the human and natural world, as well as to the question of their sustainability. The latter implies that “current generations should meet their own needs without compromising the capacity of future generations to do the same” (South Centre, 1996). In its diagnosis of problems and prescription of solutions, it treats the world as a single integrated unit, in which the current needs of at least one fifth of humanity have not been met, certain plant and animal species have been threatened with extinction, and many of the physical land, air and water and sea resources have been degraded or polluted. This has happened largely because of the very wasteful consumption and production patterns that are dominant in Western industrial societies, which are rapidly spreading to developing countries. The concept of sustainability questions the assumptions of dominant economic theories which place considerable emphasis on economic growth as an end in itself and as a process without limits. As the South Centre document puts it, “the economy . . . is an open sub-system of the Earth’s materially closed, finite and non-growing eco-system with a limited throughput of solar energy. Unlimited quantitative economic growth forever is simply impossible. It is a contradiction in terms” (South Centre, 1996).

Central to the debate on sustainability is the concept of sustainable human development (SHD), popularized by the UNDP in the **Human Development Report**, which has been published annually since 1990. These reports have consistently stressed five main values for transforming the way our current world system operates. The **Human Development Reports** affirm that development should be equitable, gender-balanced, participatory and sustainable; and that it should also respect human diversity. Equitable development means lifting people out of poverty, and narrowing income differentials among nations, and within countries and localities. Gender-balanced development affirms the need to improve the socio-economic capabilities of women in education, health and incomes, as well as to widen their opportunities and representation in labour markets and in key decision-making institutions, globally and nationally. Participation refers to the need to give hitherto excluded people voice and space in decision-making processes, and to respect and act upon their views and concerns even when these are not in conformity with prevailing policies. And human diversity simply means that development should not aim to wipe out cultural, ethnic, religious and other types of social differences, if individuals wish to preserve them, as these often give meaning to the lives of those who embrace them.

If we discount the model of entryism or the WID/GAD initiative, it is only in the global sustainable pluralist framework that gender issues are centrally located in

the theoretical discourse of development models for socio-economic change. Indeed, one can even say that with the rise of SHD, WID/GAD issues are now likely to be theorized within this very gender-sensitive model of development. There have been numerous international efforts — through global summits and the initiatives of multilateral agencies within countries — to promote the model of sustainable pluralism. NGOs, international trade unions, and other civic organizations have played actively supportive roles. Even the World Bank has resolved, under the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative Network (SAPRIN), to enter into dialogue with NGOs and civic groups in specific countries, and globally, to review IMF/World Bank-funded structural adjustment programmes (NGLS, 1996/97).

Unfortunately, the key actors for change are generally not clearly specified. And it leaves open the question of who should participate in policy dialogue — participation is often linked to questions of those who think that they are “stakeholders” on specific issues or in the development process generally. This obviously gives the model a very universal appeal, but it also renders it somehow inoperative or ineffective when dealing with real issues of policy-making. Because of its pragmatic and open-ended approach, it may be very difficult to select actual stakeholders, to determine the links between stakeholders and their constituents, and to assess whether policy dialogues are purposeful and results-oriented, or are simply ways of clarifying issues and building mutual confidence among diverse actors. When dialogues take the latter form, they may become largely indistinguishable from standard conference/seminar or workshop discussion models, which do not directly feed into, or influence, the policy process. This lack of specificity in terms of actor participation has even led some cynical critics to remark that current global summits on various aspects of sustainable development are mere “talking shops” to distract attention from the urgent need to solve human problems.

It is not surprising that, perhaps, of all the five models under review, the global sustainable pluralist model tends to be largely politics-blind. It has not been able to specify rigorously the social forces that should bring about the new global sustainable order. Despite its criticism of the dominant growth-oriented development theory, it offers no alternative integrated theory of development, apart from specifying the five values of human concerns that should be the building blocks for the promotion of sustainable development. One main problem is the wide-ranging nature of the model. It is good in criticizing prevailing development approaches, in spelling out what needs to be done in specific areas of human development, and in treating development issues from a holistic perspective. It does not, however, provide a rigorous analytical framework for explaining the dynamics of world society. Thus, expectations for the promotion of sustainable development seem to rest on moral suasion and the belief that individuals, governments and big business will ultimately recognize the long-term futility of current patterns of development. In other words, it does not pay sufficient attention to the short-term interests of actors, which form the bedrock of the most powerful social and economic theories that have helped shape the dynamics of world society. What is more, the leading proponents of the model are not really the dominant actors in the world system. Thus, global documents that try to push through ideas of human sustainable development always get watered down by powerful states, which are often under considerable influence or pressure from

transnational corporations, the logic of global markets, and international financial institutions.

Gender issues have featured very prominently in the sustainable human development model. And multilateral agencies that have backed the initiative have tried to ensure that the gender agenda informs their practices in the implementation of their projects in specific national settings (Razavi and Miller, 1995b). Indeed, gender issues have featured in all recent major world conferences — Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing, Istanbul and Rome — even though differences of opinion still exist among participants about how best to promote gendered development. It is not uncommon nowadays to hear about national debates that focus on the improvement of female participation in legislatures, of providing special seats for female representatives in key institutions, of opening up national bureaucracies and the governmental process to female lobbyists, and of respecting the rights of women to make independent choices about their lives.

Like the entryism or WID model, however, progress in gendering the global sustainable agenda would require huge amounts of resources, technical training, systematic planning and advocacy to bring down the barriers that still hold down the vast majority of women in many countries. The absence of political leverage in the global sustainable pluralist model should be seen as a serious limitation, and one which underlines the need to seek out additional strategies for gendered policy dialogues if progress is to be made in using this model. Table 2 provides an overview of the basic characteristics and outcomes of the five models of policy dialogue we have examined.



**Table 2**  
**Basic characteristics of five models of policy dialogue**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Corporatism</b>	<b>Technocracy</b>	<b>Power Sharing</b>	<b>Entryism</b>	<b>Global Pluralism</b>
<b>Who participates?</b>	Vested interests	technocrats	warring parties	interested bureaucrats	all stakeholders
<b>Actor-follower relations</b>	disciplined	disciplined	disciplined	flexible	flexible
<b>Relative power of participants</b>	equally strong	strong-weak	weak-weak	weak-strong	weak-strong
<b>Discourse framework</b>	eclectic	ideological	eclectic	eclectic	eclectic
<b>Issues for dialogue</b>	strategic set	strategic set	multiple	multiple	multiple
<b>Resources for dialogue</b>	limited	limited	many	many	many
<b>Institutions for dialogue</b>	special institutions	key ministries	special institutions	bureaucracy	global and diffuse
<b>Duration of dialogue</b>	continuous	fixed term	continuous	continuous	continuous
<b>General outcomes</b>	effective	effective/ ambiguous	ambiguous	ambiguous	ambiguous
<b>Gender outcomes</b>	positive	negative/ ambiguous	ambiguous	ambiguous	potentially ambiguous

The pronouncements of policy makers, international agencies and social activists reveal that they do not always stick to one model of policy dialogue, and that it is sometimes difficult to know what they mean by the concept. For instance, gender activists may recognize the importance of corporatism in advancing the goals of women, but may be critical of the privileges it accords to male leaders of organized interests. While they see opportunities to work within male-dominated bureaucratic institutions (entryism) to effect change, they may also hope for the kinds of power which labour wields in corporatist arrangements to obstruct state and employers' plans if deals turn out to be unfavourable. Gender activists may question the logic and goals of neo-liberalism but simultaneously feel the need to engage in purposeful dialogue in order to take advantage of market opportunities, where these are available, or to extract concessions in the social field.

The same ambiguity obtains in the rhetoric or pronouncements of international agencies. For instance, United Nations agencies, like the UNDP, may be interested in sustainable human development or the global sustainable pluralist model but sometimes recognize the significance of corporatism and power sharing as practical models for solving very difficult and immediate problems; and may sometimes pay lip service to, and even support, the technocratic model of dialogue for structural adjustment. In collaboration with the IMF, the World Bank may have launched the technocratic agenda of policy dialogue, but it has recently been

making pronouncements that support dialogues that may entail mixtures of corporatism, global sustainable pluralism, power sharing and entryism — depending upon the context in which the Bank is forced to operate. Indeed, participatory dialogue methods feature prominently in the SAPRIN initiative by the Bank and key development NGOs to review, and possibly change, the experiences of countries and social groups undergoing structural adjustment. Under such conditions of eclecticism, it is always important to know whether cross-use of models of dialogue is purposeful, tactical or rhetorical, and what the implications are likely to be if elements in the different models of dialogue are to be pursued simultaneously in the promotion of gendered development.

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## 4. INSTITUTIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS TO GENDERED POLICY DIALOGUE

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As the discussion on models of policy dialogue has shown, gender issues have only featured directly in the entryism and global sustainable pluralist models. They failed to account for the fundamentals of the frameworks for dialogue in the corporatist, technocratic, and power sharing models. However, women made major gains under the corporatist model because of the issues of equity and compromise that were built into the model's macro-economic discourse and political values. This made advocacy work for gender equity and participation much less difficult than it would have been under a different discourse and institutional order. Current global trends suggest that efforts to promote gendered policy dialogues may have to take place within the frameworks of sustainable global pluralism and the entryism model of the WID/GAD initiative, and in an environment where market liberalism is the dominant discourse for regulating development. In post-civil war countries, gendered policy dialogue will, in addition, have to relate to the discourse and political dynamics of power sharing. However, irrespective of the model one deals with, there are currently ideological and structural constraints to efforts aimed at promoting gendered policy dialogue and development. This section addresses these issues.

### ◆ 4.1 Conflicting Discourses on Economy and Society

Perhaps the greatest barrier to the institutionalization of gendered development is the inflexible nature of the dominant neo-liberal discourse. Despite efforts to engage this discourse from a sympathetic perspective, wide gaps exist between the fundamental premises, values and goals of neo-liberalism and the broad gender discourse. As we have seen, neo-liberalism is primarily concerned with market efficiency, limited government, balanced budgets, private ownership of assets, trade liberalization, and unregulated competition. Its view of society is derived from a reading of individuals who are believed to be capable of making rational choices and maximizing opportunities. The way society is organized and the constraints which social structures, beliefs and ideologies have on individual choices hardly feature in the model's theoretical and policy formulations. It is believed that a free economy would allow the various production factors to be efficiently rewarded, raise national output and, in the long run, lift even those in poverty out of their misery. The theory pays little or no attention to problems of disadvantaged groups, communities and countries, and is indifferent (or treats

them at best in an instrumentalist way) to questions of equity and participation as outcomes that should be engineered by policy makers.

On the other hand, the premises, values and goals of the gender discourse on development are radically different. Despite past efforts to promote gender issues from a “women-are-efficient-for-development” perspective, as well as recent attempts to incorporate neo-liberal efficiency arguments into gender analysis (Collier, 1989; Palmer, 1992; Razavi and Miller, 1995a), the discourse remains firmly anchored on the arguments and values of equity. This should not be surprising. The gender discourse seeks to correct basic disadvantages which women face in a number of vital institutions — such as in the allocation of responsibilities and value remuneration in the household economy, in the distribution of incomes and public employment, in the control of assets and in inheritance, in access to top decision-making jobs, in education and access to social services, and in ideologies or beliefs that question or deny women’s rights to choose how they wish to live their lives. Advocates of equity, as the discussion on corporatism has shown, always rely on authoritative institutions like the state to change structures that reinforce social discrimination, protect the weak, and provide incentives to empower the excluded. The broad gender discourse is, therefore, interventionist, very multi-faceted in terms of the issues it tackles, flexible in approach, and strongly rooted in issues of social transformation and the dynamics of “the moral economy” (Kabeer and Joeke, 1991; Kabeer, 1994).

Even the few attempts to make the gender discourse sensitive to the concerns of neo-liberalism do not strongly depart from the imperatives of intervention to help women maximize market opportunities. For instance, operating within the analytical framework of competition, information and efficiency, Collier suggests that public authorities should intervene in the economy to correct disadvantages that women face in financial markets, educational systems, social networks, and extension services. Such interventions would allow women to tap the necessary information and develop capabilities to engage in the production of tradable goods, which have benefited from adjustment, and which men dominate, especially in Africa. Palmer, on the other hand, combines calls for legislation and reforms of the public sector with rather outlandish suggestions for the establishment of plantations in African agriculture to help free female labour from smallholding family farms that do not pay women the full costs of their labour.

It is, however, in the area of human capital development that aspects of the gender discourse and neo-liberalism have tended to converge. This has been assisted by the empirical evidence emerging in economics that human capital development may after all be largely responsible for much of economic growth; and the close correlation between investment in women’s education and improvements in the overall educational levels of societies, their nutritional and health status, and the lowering of fertility rates. Therefore, an emerging view in neo-liberal policy circles is that it is economically efficient to invest in women. This perspective has been embraced by some feminist economists as it speaks to the need to recognize the contributions of women in society. Militant feminists, on the other hand, have correctly challenged this instrumentalist view of gendered development, since it seems to be saying that gender inequalities could only be eradicated if economic efficiency were improved.

The point remains that convergence in discourse is still at the margins of the neo-liberal policy framework. The foundations of neo-liberalism, particularly its views on the macro-economy and society, have not been sufficiently undermined by gender initiatives. Until convergence occurs at the macro level, as happened with the conflicting claims of labour, capital and the state under Keynesianism, it seems difficult to be confident about prospects of institutionalizing policy dialogues that could lead to gendered development. Table 3 brings out the differences between the neo-liberal and gender discourses and their areas of convergence.

**Table 3**  
**Conflicting perspectives in the gender and neo-liberal discourses**

	<b>Neo-liberal Discourse</b>	<b>Gender Discourse</b>	<b>Convergence of Discourses*</b>
<b>Analytical focus</b>	efficiency; competition; limited government; balanced budgets; trade liberalization; private ownership of assets	equity; participation; remuneration and sharing of household work; efficiency	xxx
<b>Levels of analysis</b>	macro-economy; sectoral economy; factor markets; public sector; social provisioning	households; factor markets; macro-economy; public sector; traditional institutions; social provisioning; ideologies	xxx
<b>Policy instruments</b>	markets	state intervention; gender activism; legislation	x
<b>Views on society</b>	passive	active	x
<b>Views on investment in women</b>	instrumentalist	a value in its own right/instrumentalist	xx

\*Note: "x" denotes little or no convergence; "xx" denotes some convergence; "xxx" denotes strong differences, but some areas of convergence.

## ◆ 4.2 Changes in the Institutional Balance of Power

Globalization has led to radical changes in the institutional distribution of power that are likely to affect prospects for the promotion of policy dialogues for gendered development. Wide disparities have emerged, or persisted, between countries, regions and social groups in incomes, access to market opportunities, technology and communication facilities. Western industrial countries account for over 75 per cent of the world's gross domestic product; and it has been estimated that the gap in per capita income between industrial and developing countries tripled from 1960 to 1993. Indeed, the ratios of the shares of global income of the richest 20 per cent and the poorest 20 per cent doubled from 30:1 to 61:1 (UNDP, 1996). Whereas Asian countries, particularly those in the Far East, experienced rapid per capita income growth in the 1980s, and OECD countries maintained slow but stable growth in the same period, most other regions, particularly Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, had dismal growth records. The distribution of the gains of communication and information technologies have tended to reflect

these disparities, with high- or growing-income countries reaping most of the advantages.

Not surprisingly, institutional arrangements for managing global and national affairs have changed considerably. The power of transnational corporations and global financial markets has dramatically grown. And so has that of donor governments and multilateral agencies. Emerging from this growth in Western power are Northern non-governmental organizations, which currently receive substantial funds from their home governments and the multilateral agencies in efforts to promote market reforms and to offer social relief in poor countries. Institutions that have lost out are unions, established political parties, and states in crisis (UNRISD, 1995). The latter, for instance, have become increasingly dependent upon Western donor governments, multilateral institutions and Northern NGOs for development finance, technical assistance and, in some cases, basic social relief. In 1991, for instance, 11 countries were dependent upon Western financial assistance for more than 20 per cent of their gross national product — Mozambique (69 per cent), Nicaragua (47.6 per cent), Guinea Bissau (43.4 per cent), Tanzania (33.8 per cent), Bhutan (25.4 per cent), Malawi (22.6 per cent), Burundi (21.6 per cent), Rwanda (21.5 per cent), Lesotho (20.5 per cent), Uganda (20.5 per cent) and Chad (20.2 per cent) (ActionAid, 1995).

On balance, the decisive shift in the global distribution of power in favour of Western institutions should have worked in favour of attempts to promote a more gendered world economy and society. After all, a cursory look at the GEM and GDI tables compiled by the UNDP would show that industrial countries do not only have superior HDIs and per capita incomes, they also rank, on average, very highly on GDI and GEM. However, several constraints to gendered development can be identified with the changes in the global distribution of power. First, countries that have made the biggest advances in GDI and GEM — Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland, for instance — are not the ones that dominate the international discourse on development, nor are they the ones with strategic influence in the Western and global power structure. Second, the multilateral institutions that have made the most progress in their discourse on, and support for, gendered development — UNICEF, UNFPA, and UNDP — are not the ones that set the global macro-economic agenda, nor do they have enough resources and political clout to get governments to support their policy recommendations in the way the IMF and World Bank do.

Third, the loss of power by secular institutions like trade unions, the state and established political parties before powerful gendered institutions have been put in place is likely to make the work of gender advocacy and development much more difficult than in the past. For one thing, global power does not readily translate into local or national power, as the values of the old order — such as respect for sovereignty, belief in national or social differences, and avoidance of responsibilities — may still guide the behaviour of actors, strong as well as weak. There is, therefore, a very serious institutional vacuum in most societies where the bonds of solidarity that held people together — whether Western state welfarism, East European socialism or Third World nationalism — have sundered. These bonds or ideologies helped to focus women's struggles in the past and made it relatively easy to hold national leaders or politicians accountable for their actions. The failure of alternatives to emerge is likely to promote more opportunistic types of political behaviour. Indeed, the literature on poverty and exclusion suggests that

the poor and the weak are often victims to such behaviour, as pro-poor programmes can be derailed, aborted or seriously diluted if they do not conform to the prevailing needs or strategies of those for whom they are set up (Stiefel and Wolfe, 1994). Whereas democratization makes it relatively easy to popularize hitherto excluded issues in the public agenda, the institutional vacuum means that activists may have to be vigilant all the time to ensure that new issues remain in the public domain.

Furthermore, the erosion of the power of trade unions and established political parties is likely to empower non-secular institutions that are based on ethnicity, religion and tradition. The discourses of these types of institutions are often inward-looking, non-differentiated and critical of individuals or groups that fall outside of what leaders have established as group boundaries. They are also, in most instances, strongly conservative and anti-gender equality. Polarization helps to further the goals of leaders, makes it difficult for moderates to operate, and ensures a high degree of loyalty from constituents. Women may find it difficult to build bridges and reach out to other women across the social divide or to push through gender concerns within the closed discourses of these movements.

In addition, weaknesses in state capacity are likely to encourage those who are entrusted with the responsibility to initiate development programmes to be less enthusiastic in their duties than they would be if the bureaucracies in which they work provided them with sufficient remuneration, job security, career prospects and basic efficiency-enhancing infrastructure. Indeed, the erosion of state capacity in crisis societies has tended to undermine the loyalties of staff, who often seek out alternative income activities or privatize the time and resources of the bureaucracies in which they work (Adedeji et al., 1995; Bangura, 1994).

### ◆ 4.3 Rigidities in Bureaucratic Cultures

Gendered policy dialogues require responsive bureaucracies. Recent writings by feminist political scientists have exposed the inherent gender biases of bureaucracies and the difficulties of reforming them (Goetz, 1995; Franzway et al., 1989; Hale and Kelly 1989; Sawyer, 1996 ). The simple fact is that bureaucracies are about routines, role fulfilment, rules, and standard work procedures. Routines reduce the costs of co-ordination and potential conflicts, and make complex activities look mutually consistent when they are simultaneously implemented. A properly functioning bureaucracy is one where people do what they are supposed to do. There is less room for discretionary power, personal initiative or extensive innovation. Indeed, individuals who work in bureaucracies are often concerned about the institutional appropriateness of their actions than with outcomes. March and Olsen make the very perceptive remark that “plans, information gathering, analysis, consultation and other observable features of . . . decision making” can be explained less in terms of what they are likely to contribute to decision outcomes than as “symbols and signals of decision making propriety” (March and Olsen, 1989).

One major implication of this view of bureaucracies is that policy initiatives that threaten, or are out of tune with, routine practices are unlikely to be welcomed by bureaucratic actors, let alone succeed when they are introduced. The literature on the world’s most complex bureaucracy, the US government, suggests that bold policy proposals from presidents are regularly defeated or aborted irrespective of

the level of commitment shown in early phases of the policy process (March and Olsen, 1989; Szanton, 1981). The record of the international financial institutions also suggests that they often face stiff resistance from Third World bureaucracies when they try to introduce market reforms, which threaten routine ways of doing things. Bureaucratic restructuring, retraining and, sometimes, active supervision of programmes by staff from headquarters are ways in which they have tried to get round the problem. The sustainability of these efforts is, however, open to doubt if the rewards structure is not high or reliable enough to satisfy most staff. Our discussion of the WID experience also highlights the problems that WID machineries have faced in their efforts to mainstream gender issues in national and international bureaucracies.

Gender issues face additional problems when attempts are made to fit them into bureaucratic practices. Bureaucracies function by converting complex phenomena into manageable, small problems, which individual workers can fit into their daily routines. Because of the need to disaggregate and to simplify, bureaucracies tend to be hierarchical, with a complex web of ministries, departments, units, sub-units, divisions, committees, sub-committees and associated agencies enjoying different levels of responsibilities and authority. A structure of command allows things to get done from the top down, and to ensure compliance. This places at a disadvantage issues like gendered development that seek to challenge, holistically, the way societies and public institutions function.

Bureaucracies would prefer to split up all issues in order to be able to process them with the aid of their standard operating procedures. But splitting issues may weaken the power of the message, especially if an issue ends up in a less central ministry, department or sector. Indeed, even if an issue succeeds in getting through to key ministries or departments, it may take a considerable amount of time before the basic message it seeks to convey becomes institutionalized in the rest of the bureaucratic machinery. Bureaucratic fragmentation, which goes with hierarchy, may act to undermine or constrain top-level commands especially when an issue is really new, when there are no incentives for bureaucrats to treat it differently, and when most bureaucrats are not yet convinced about its viability or merits. A new issue may also enjoy highly uneven degrees of support from staff in different branches of the bureaucracy who often tend to guard their own individual ministerial territories.

Other societal elements further complicate the problems of mainstreaming gender into policy-making institutions. As routines evolve over long periods, they are also likely to be shaped by values and rules that are rooted in history — such as social hierarchy, the force of tradition, informality, and authoritarian political practices. Institutions reproduce class and other types of cleavages through their recruitment patterns as well as in their routine support for the accumulation of capital (Miliband, 1969). Issues that are secondary in the calculations of economic enterprises are unlikely to be given serious attention unless backed by concerted political authority and commitment.

Traditions, such as religion and customary practices, are often also, as we have seen, gender biased. They tend to work against women in the areas of autonomy, participation, decision-making responsibilities, and remuneration. Bureaucrats are socialized into these traditions and their routine official practices may reflect such gender biases. Another constraint to the promotion of gendered policy dialogues is

informality, which refers to situations where major policy issues are initiated, discussed and decided upon in informal networks rather than in established bureaucratic set-ups. Transparency may be lost, and only those with access to the networks may get empowered. Such networks may be “old boys” links and gatherings, social clubs and private homes, for example, where women may be seriously disadvantaged.

A country’s political culture also has implications for the way its bureaucracy is likely to respond to calls for gendered policy dialogue. Authoritarianism may act as a serious constraint to the institutionalization of dialogue systems that grant relative autonomy, rights of participation and concessions to contending actors. This may occur in societies that are under military rule, one-party dictatorships or executive monarchies where the culture of open debate or dialogue is limited or non-existent. As the experiences of former communist régimes in Eastern Europe have shown, democratization does not easily alter hitherto authoritarian reflexes in public life. Indeed, bureaucracies are often among the institutions least likely to change when formal political rules become more competitive.

Bureaucrats tend to assume enormous authoritarian powers when societies are under military rule. In Africa, this can be explained by the military’s low level of education and civic experiences when compared to those of bureaucrats and other élite groups. These enhanced bureaucratic powers are often shielded from public scrutiny and regulation. During the oil boom of the 1970s in Nigeria, civil servants were referred to as “Super Permanent Secretaries” — non-accountable senior bureaucrats using the protection of the military to define and implement far-reaching public policies (Bangura, 1994). In Latin America, such experiences can lead to what O’Donnell has described as “bureaucratic authoritarianism” — military commandism and bureaucratic power in support of economic growth (O’Donnell, 1973). Even where authoritarian governments have gone out of their way to encourage debate on major public issues they have always tried to control the process from the top. The result is at best top-down dialogue, as in the Ujamaa experiment in Tanzania. Or dialogue that may be participatory but excludes certain fundamentals from the agenda, like the questioning of socialism, as in the pro-poor social policy programmes in Cuba, Viet Nam and China.

Based on what is known about the constraints of bureaucratic culture on institutional change, one should be wary of efforts by development agencies that seek rapidly to push through gendered policy dialogues in the bureaucracies of crisis societies where they currently enjoy much influence. Undoubtedly, protracted crises have opened up opportunities to introduce radical changes, including gender issues, in the bureaucracies of such countries. However, such opportunities may fizzle out if the conditions that have given rise to their introduction change before women are in a position to defend the gains. Our analysis has shown that it takes an awful lot of time and resources for new issues to become routinized in the social practices of actors. Some sectors or ministries with favourable gendered incentives may thrive while others may experience no change or very little change. When the funds and other incentives that prop up gender agendas dry up and the external actors or catalysts withdraw, locals may slip back to what they know and consider as appropriate.

#### ◆ 4.4 Unequal Development in Gender Constituencies



Our study suggests that policy dialogues are unlikely to be effective if disadvantaged groups in the dialogue process do not have a capacity to obstruct unsatisfactory policy outcomes. The gains of labour unions in the corporatist model owed much to their capacity for obstruction, which the state and capital felt unions would utilize if their views or interests were ignored. Relations between leaders and followers are important in building such capacity, which followers can also use against leaders when corporate outcomes turn out to be unfavourable. Gender advocates recognize the significance of collective action strategies in getting politicians, development agencies and bureaucrats to respond to gender demands. Indeed, a wide range of gender movements — covering such issues as the environment, social relief, mutual neighbourhood assistance schemes, women's rights, constitutional change, the rights of the girl child, reform of traditional institutions, and female participation in public office — now exist in varying degrees in virtually every country of the world. There have also been concerted efforts to co-ordinate the activities of the various women's organizations in specific countries under unified institutional arrangements. These efforts have helped to give women's struggles the focus and dynamism that they need to sustain the feminist agenda. Indeed, many of the gains which women have made in public policy owe more to the advocacy and mobilizational work of gender groups than to philanthropy or simple goodwill from men.

Gender constituencies tend to suffer, however, from a number of important constraints. They seem to lack some of the structural advantages that allow organized interests like labour unions to impose their agendas on public policy. While feminist movements may attract strong sympathy from society, corporate institutions and governments for many of the causes they advance, such sympathy does not easily translate into purposeful support and action, as penalties for infringing upon, or ignoring, gender agendas are weak or non-existent. For instance, gender relations at the crucial level of family life are influenced by affective or co-operative values which are different from the kinds of "relations of necessity or compulsion" that are dominant in capital-labour relations. Gender relations at the household level are, therefore, not readily open to systematic questioning and bargaining as in capital-labour relations. Such affective family relations can be, and often are, disadvantageous to women; they can also be conflictual, and can lead to breakdowns. But the family remains largely a private institution in most countries, despite the progress which feminists have made, especially in Western societies, to break the barriers or walls that shield it from public scrutiny. Thus, female responses to male wrongdoing at the level of the household tend to be individualistic and not collective, diffuse and not integrated, sporadic and not strategic. Their capacity to obstruct is well below that which organized labour has demonstrated in the corporatist model.

Furthermore, there are wide variations in the capabilities of gender constituencies across the world, which make it necessary to raise the important question of who can, or has the right to, represent which women in policy dialogues. Quite apart from the standard argument that women are divided along class lines and, therefore, tend to have conflicting visions of society, the density, spread and power of gender organizations tend to be unequally distributed across regions, as well as within countries and localities. Much of the global discourse on gender has been shaped by Western feminist organizations, whose point of departure is obviously the values and norms of the societies that they know best. The issue is not whether what these organizations say has relevance in furthering the causes of women in

other regional or country settings. However, critics can equate Western hegemony in the global gender discourse as a version of imperialism, which can make the work of allied local feminists difficult — the latter can easily be discredited as collaborators by male militants with separate or conflicting agendas on, say, religion, tradition, ethnicity, power politics, civil war, and democratization. What is more, the values of secularism, individualism and female autonomy, which are central to the dominant Western liberal feminist discourse, may not make much sense to rural or urban “traditional” women in developing countries whose gender strategies may require the processing of claims within institutions that are relatively collective and non-secular.

Closely related to this point is the view that the geographical spread of feminist movements with a national focus tends to be very low in developing countries. In multi-ethnic or multi-religious societies where socio-economic inequalities are very sharp, women’s disadvantages in, for instance, education, health provisioning, incomes and employment may reflect such ethnically or religiously defined cleavages. Women in more advanced regions or ethnic/religious groups may fare better than even men in severely disadvantaged groups or regions. Women in disadvantaged groups or regions may find it difficult to support policies which call for quotas and special funds for women if they merely result in women in better-off areas picking up the opportunities and widening the gap between regions and groups. In addition, gender movements also tend to suffer from a heavy urban bias, with a limited set of vocal activists defining the discourse and programmes of activities. Even within urban areas, wide differences may exist between highly literate vocal groups and informal women’s organizations of traders, artisans and those engaged in customary practices. Vocal groups can, and are often able to, reach out to the latter when there is a convergence of interests and society is ready for change at critical conjunctures. But serious conflicts may also emerge between women because of differences in socialization and divergent positions and goals in society.

Something comparable to this problem occurred in Sierra Leone in 1996. In February and March 1996, urban women activists led the way by mobilizing women of all walks of life, including in rural areas, to defy attempts by the military to postpone the elections that had been scheduled for 26 February, 1996. Organized women were the only section of society ready openly to defy the soldiers, by staging mass demonstrations, at the critical period when the issue of postponement was to be debated in a specially convened conference, and in the period leading up to the elections, when it was unclear whether the army would honour the verdict of the conference. However, the same women have been in serious conflict since August 1996, sometimes violently, over the future of a well entrenched female institution — the *Bondo/Sande*<sup>3</sup> — which rural and urban “traditional” women fully embrace as central to their definition of womanhood, but which a small section of urban elite women see as an infringement on the sexual and health rights of women. The latter appeal to Modernity and the Beijing Declaration, the former to Tradition and the need for social order.

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<sup>3</sup> *Bondo* (in Temne) or *Sande* (in Mende) is a secret society, entirely controlled by women, which initiates adolescent girls into the rites of womanhood as defined in traditional social settings, and which prepares them for the responsibilities of marriage. It extols the values of female solidarity and equality, and chastity before marriage. A major ritual in the initiation ceremony is circumcision.

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## 5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY ISSUES

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This paper has tried to lend analytical clarity to the concept of policy dialogue, which has gained much currency in recent years as governments, international agencies and social activists grapple with the problems of promoting stable, equitable and sustainable development in a rapidly changing and conflict-ridden world. There has been no systematic attempt by users to explain what they mean by policy dialogue, the kinds of dialogue they seek to promote, and the conditions under which they would be effective. It is not surprising that use of the concept remains eclectic and unfocused, creating the cynical view in some quarters that users do not mean what they say, and that the concept is simply another fad to help decision makers avoid solving difficult problems. However, we believe that the concept ought to be taken seriously as some of the great social transformations of this century — those resulting in the building of the welfare state, Third World nationalism, and socialism — have been driven by a desire to manage in purposeful ways the conflicting interests of society and to produce win-win outcomes.

We see similar concerns for compromise emerging even in efforts to introduce ideologically driven market reforms in developing countries where creditors have to engage in a series of dialogues over policy issues to enable outcomes to have the appearance of endogeneity and joint responsibility. The high incidence of civil wars in multi-ethnic societies, where both government and opposition parties have been unable to emerge as clear winners, has indeed given much impetus to the concept of power sharing, which is a very advanced form of policy dialogue. To echo the words of Anthony Giddens, “we live in a world which is more ‘dialogic’ than ever before. Indeed, dialogue is the prime requirement of our world” (*New Statesman*, 10 January, 1997. pp. 19-20). In short, policy dialogues are here to stay even if users are unclear about their basic attributes. How gendered development should be promoted using the framework of dialogue, however, remains to be systematically worked out. Women have fared differently in the various models of dialogue we have examined — tending to score best under corporatism even though issues of gender equity were not a central part of that model’s rules of compromise. On the other hand, the model of global sustainable pluralism, or sustainable human development, which positively embraces gender concerns, remains marginal to the power calculations of those who take key global and national decisions.

Strategies for the promotion of gendered development may need to be sensitive to the institutional and ideological elements of dialogue processes. It is important to know who participates in dialogues, what the terms of participation are, how power is distributed among participants, what kinds of relations exist between participants and their base constituencies, which institutions have been established for dialogue, what the underlying discourse and sets of issues are that would be handled in dialogues, and whether special resources would be required to support dialogue processes. Answers to these questions would vary considerably depending upon the model of dialogue chosen. They are also likely to produce different gender outcomes in specific country settings. We end with a set of suggestions and questions for overcoming some of the structural and ideological constraints to results-oriented gendered dialogue.

- It is possible that, at the core of the problems in efforts to institutionalize gendered policy dialogues, lie the conflicting discourses of the gender and neo-liberal policy frameworks. There has been some convergence in recent years as evidence emerges that progress in human capital development is central to the growth experiences of countries, and that enhancing women's capabilities in education and health would bring dividends in overall human capital formation, and therefore growth. The question is how to build upon this convergence on education and health issues and pry open the dominant neo-liberal macro-economic framework — which remains largely gender-blind (Elson, 1991) — and inject perspectives of gender-equity that can transcend, yet support, both the narrow self-interests of women and the demands for economic efficiency and stabilization. Is it possible to create a gendered theory of economic management like that of Keynesian economics, for instance, which can address the interests of all major groups in society while at the same time speak to the great issues of macro-economic development and management? The sustainable human development model holds promise, but it is still at a very rudimentary stage of development.
- A related issue is the question of how to respond to the changes in the global distribution of power, which have empowered less gender-sensitive institutions. One strategy is to continue with work already underway in the engendering of these institutions — the World Bank, the IMF, WTO, and the G-7 economic super states of the United States, Japan, Germany, Canada, France, Italy and the United Kingdom (Razavi and Miller, 1995a and b; Kardam, 1993). An additional strategy is to support efforts that seek to give more powers to the United Nations system, especially the ILO, UNCTAD and the UNDP — which are much more sensitive to the goals of sustainable human development — in the areas of global economic policy-making (South Centre, 1995). Such efforts may have to be combined with wider pressures to limit the grip which the Bretton Woods institutions have over the debt problems of poor countries, and the special relationship they enjoy with the major donor governments and financial markets that has made it difficult for poor countries to define their own policy agendas. Support may also be given to efforts by gender-friendly Nordic countries to censor the adjustment record of these institutions (ActionAid, 1995), as well as to the advocacy work of international development NGOs.
- At the domestic level, policy may wish to focus on efforts to improve the capabilities of states that have experienced long periods of economic, social and political crises. If income and employment opportunities are not improved in the public bureaucracies of these countries, efforts to promote sustainable dialogue are likely to be easily defeated or abandoned. Bureaucrats will be attracted to gender programmes only if they believe that there are opportunities to be tapped as part of already existing networks of survival strategies. Once the funds and other incentives dry up, and the funding agencies withdraw, bureaucrats are likely to fall back on traditional gender-discriminatory practices. Reforming and enhancing the capabilities of bureaucracies in societies where state weakness has encouraged donors and activists to rapidly push through gender issues, is a value, therefore, in its own right. While all states, weak as well as strong, can define development agendas, only strong states can marshal the necessary resources and institutional skills to implement and monitor reforms. Work in this area may require the building of

a wide range of alliances with groups that also recognize the need for public sector reforms.

- Related to this issue is the constraint of bureaucratic cultures. Our analysis has shown that bureaucracies, by definition, are very resistant to rapid systemic change. Gender groups have tried to go round this problem by relying on sympathetic and charismatic male leaders, as in Uganda, to set the tone of debates and to compel bureaucrats to embrace gender agendas (Goetz, 1995). They have also allied with gender-sensitive male decision-making bureaucrats, as the WID experience points out. These strategies are useful but may not always be sustainable. The view that women need to form at least 30 per cent of an institution's staff for gender mainstreaming efforts to be effective needs to be taken seriously (UNDP, 1996). This figure may, of course, vary from country to country, but the basic message is that advocates may need to have a strategic view of the critical mass of gender presence that national bureaucracies require in order for gender voices to have sustained impact on the policy process. Making special efforts to improve upon the gender development indicators (GDI) would indeed help to raise the level of consciousness among women for public office (GEM) and narrow the intra-gender gaps and differences, which sometimes make it difficult for empowered women to relate to their base constituencies (who may still be struggling with economic capability issues or, in plain language, poverty).
- Given the fragmented, yet hierarchical, way bureaucracies function, the job of mainstreaming gender into the policy-making machinery is not likely to be easy. Current discourse strategies seem to focus on changing the way vital ministries like finance, agriculture, industry and presidential offices operate, rather than supporting special ministries or units for women's affairs that can easily lead to a ghettoization of gender issues. Such efforts need to be sustained. They may not, however, on their own be enough to effect the kinds of all-round systemic change that is required to routinize gender issues in public bureaucracies. Progress in mainstreaming gender at the top may not easily translate into progress in enforcing gender practices at the bottom. Policy may also need to focus on middle and low level bureaucrats, as well as on marginal or not-so-central ministries, departments and units for policy dialogue for gendered development to be sustainable. This requires enormous financial and human resources as well as effective monitoring institutions. Those who participate in these dialogues should also develop long-term horizons of success as bureaucratic practices may not easily change because of goodwill, incentives and commitments. Putting too much emphasis on instant change may actually frustrate activists and decision makers when things go wrong, and may lead to programmes being prematurely aborted or abandoned.
- Effective policy dialogues require strong social movements that can impose costs on, or punish, decision-making actors who refuse to accommodate popular demands or honour agreements. The gender movement is growing at a remarkable pace, both globally and within all countries. However, much remains to be done in correcting inequalities among women in class, ethnic and regional terms, and in improving the geographical spread and density of gender movements that claim to have national focus. These differences and shortcomings create additional problems for women activists in mobilizing their natural constituencies against unjust public policies. Policies that seek to

promote gendered policy dialogues may have to take these differences into account in making decisions about issues of representation, participation and accountability. The positive lessons of class solidarity demonstrated in the corporatist model may also have to be heeded. In other words, women's activism in broad social movements for equity and participation is important in advancing the goals of policy dialogue for gendered development.

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