Introduction

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This collection of essays arose out of our perception that as the field of women and gender issues in development has expanded and grown more complex, it may be losing its momentum. We invited several people to use their research and experience to reflect on where they think the field is today and where it is going. We looked for authors from a variety of roles, from scholars and policy makers to advocates and those who do fieldwork in specific sectors. We sought perspectives from different regions, including Latin America, Asia, and Africa, and from men as well as women. Some of our writers accept, if they do not champion, globalization; others are quite critical of it.

This volume offers a rich menu of views. It is appearing at a time when the international political system is being rapidly restructured, with important implications for multilateral approaches, development models, and resource flows. We are no longer living in a “post–Cold War” world, which was characterized by the unquestioned dominance of neoliberal economics and a rising wave of democratization. The debt crisis of the 1980s gave the Western industrialized countries the leverage to push for economic reforms in many regions of the world, including policies that reduced the role of the state and increased trade and investment, promoting “free markets” to stimulate growth. The so-called Washington Consensus in favor of structural adjustment reforms had the positive effect of reducing inflation in many cases and increasing capital flows, but the negative effect
of cutting government spending on social and infrastructure investment, with long-term implications for human security as well as economic competitiveness. Neoliberal reforms also produced an active antiglobalization movement, and the Consensus itself has developed cracks, as is evident, for example, in the harsh criticisms of the International Monetary Fund by former Chief Economist of the World Bank Joseph Stiglitz (2002).

Using the “war on terror” as a rationale, the United States during George W. Bush’s administration has promoted “regime change,” a process that contrasts starkly with the transitions from authoritarianism that occurred globally from the late 1970s to the late 1990s. These earlier transitions were encouraged by a receptive international environment but were largely driven by internal forces. Since September 11, U.S. unilateralism has undercut multilateral institutions and practices that had been painstakingly constructed over several decades, including a key role for the United Nations in setting international norms, resolving global issues, promoting development, and preventing war.

Globalization and restructuring have imposed disproportionate costs on women, but other aspects of multilateralism have brought positive changes. The worldwide emergence of women’s movements, widespread efforts to implement programs to improve women’s access to material resources, and the incorporation of women’s rights into international law took place during the last three decades in the political space created by the UN Decade for Women (1975–85) and sustained momentum through the Fourth World Conference in Beijing (1995) and beyond. Women’s activism influenced UN conferences on issues ranging from human rights, population, and habitat to sustainable development. A reversal of the global trend toward multilateralism will surely undermine these advances. If it continues unchecked, the increasing militarization of international politics could have severe consequences for women’s lives and will further divert attention from the pressing issues of improved equity and greater human security.

The U.S. response to the attacks of September 11 includes an argument for increased foreign assistance (on the grounds that poverty is among the “root causes” of terrorism, for example), the U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and the increasingly controversial efforts to stabilize and democratize them have created a demand for solutions that can be put into place rapidly. Co-optation has been an issue for women in the South who fear that funding from governments and foundations in the North sets their agendas. Co-optation may become a more pressing issue for Northern experts and nongovernmental organizations.
(NGOs) as the United States and its allies use the issue of women’s rights to but-tress its case for intervention, whatever the consequences may be for women in
countries where support for traditional gender roles has become a badge of na-
tional and religious resistance to Western-style modernization.

These changes in U.S. policies and in the international system pose problems
not only for women in Afghanistan and Iraq. The post-9/11 world is a precari-
ous time to do development work. The essays in this volume address the broader
issues of women and gender, development and globalization that need rethinking
as we move into this uncharted territory. We hope this book will provoke re-
newed attention to these issues and new energy to seek more effective strategies
for the future.

CREATIVE TENSIONS?

The field of women/gender and development has grown rapidly over the last
three decades, producing multidisciplinary research and providing the basis for
gender-sensitive policies in many public and private institutions, including multi-
lateral and bilateral foreign assistance agencies. Efforts to address women’s mar-
ginalization have also had to confront persistent bureaucratic resistance. Among
the major debates within the field are the conflict between women in development
(wid) versus gender and development (gad); between those who think poverty
is an appropriate focus to reach women and those who find it a “trap”; between
gender rhetoric and bureaucratic foot-dragging; and between the theories of
researchers and policy analysts and the needs of practitioners. Some are con-
vinced that women can be reached through “mainstreaming” donor projects and
programs; others think the focus on “gender” has weakened organizing by and
for women.

There is widespread agreement that the market alone does not serve women
well, but few have addressed the issue of how to strengthen states to regulate
markets or how to confront the corruption that has proven endemic in emerging
democracies. There are those who think globalization is inevitable and must be
regulated and those who think that the only viable feminist position is to join the
antiglobalization movements that have shown their ability to organize effective
demonstrations in Seattle, Genoa, Cancun, and elsewhere (see Mohanty 2003).

Postcolonial writers have challenged the assumptions of development theory
and practice in ways that are relevant to women, fueling conflicts between uni-
versalism and pluralism and producing a new focus on transnational identities.
Some see the rise of civil societies, both local and global, as promising arenas of women’s empowerment, yet others insist that a strong and capable state remains critical to women’s concerns. The rise of women’s grassroots movements during the past few decades is unprecedented. Yet some fear that NGOs may not be sufficiently democratic, representative, or autonomous to represent women’s interests and argue that decentralization can reinforce local power hierarchies rather than challenge them. There are contradictions between the promises of neoliberal reform and the realities of most people’s lives, often seen in the impatience of voters who can now express their frustrations through the ballot box. These stresses can be mapped onto the increasingly visible tension between development models that focus on economic growth and those that emphasize human capabilities and human security. Meanwhile, gender analysis from different interventions—for example, in forestry, information technology, and the privatization of state assets, to name three included in this volume—are rarely connected to one another or systematically linked to broader trends and policy goals.  

There has been surprisingly little discussion of how to approach gender and development in increasingly violent, culturally politicized environments. We would argue that since September 11 and the invasion of Iraq, human security has become even more important as an alternative approach to development. In contrast to the traditional emphasis on military security, the concerns of human security center on health, livelihood, housing and land, environment, and freedom from violence within the home and community.

These debates are engaged by many of the essays in this book. We hope that they will help spur new thinking and action.

**Organization of the Book**

The book is divided into three sections reflecting the three main themes of the volume: institutions, resources, and mobilization.

*Institutions: Opportunities and Barriers*

The essays in the first section focus on institutional issues. Jane Jaquette and Kathleen Staudt begin with a historical overview of the evolution of the field beginning with their own experience as policy analysts at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in the late 1970s. They discuss the rise of WID and the emergence of GAD, showing how each responded to major shifts in the international system, from the North-South dialogue of the 1970s, to the re-
newed Cold War and Washington Consensus of the 1980s, the post–Cold War 1990s, and U.S. unilateralism since 9/11. Noting that GAD “fatigue” may be setting in, they call for new ideas and alliances and suggest these will have to begin by stepping back from earlier debates and rethinking women’s relations to markets, civil society, and the state.

Elisabeth Prügl and Audrey Lustgarten take up the issue of mainstreaming, a GAD initiative introduced to induce bureaucracies to take up the issue of women across the board. Noting that gender mainstreaming has been adopted by governments and donor agencies all over the world, they discuss how several UN agencies defined and tried to implement mainstreaming. In their view, mainstreaming has largely been co-opted, and efforts to implement the concept “turned a radical movement idea into a strategy of public management” by emphasizing processes rather than outcomes. They observe that evaluations still uncover the kinds of problems that mainstreaming was supposed to overcome.

David Hirschmann focuses on the difficulties of translating gender rhetoric, which is widely accepted by donors, into gender equity in practice. A consultant to USAID, the World Bank, and other donor agencies, Hirschmann recounts how things change but remain the same. In the 1980s, when he visited projects to assess their gender impact, he was directed to the “home economics” people. By the 1990s, he was told to go talk to “the sociologists,” although it was clear that the economists had the power. Hirschmann concludes that the macroeconomic priorities of foreign assistance agencies such as USAID and the World Bank make it very difficult to raise concerns about women and other marginalized groups.

Sylvia Chant examines how a gender perspective can inform an analysis of poverty, which remains a priority for foreign assistance agencies. Cecile Jackson (1998) and others have argued that poverty is a “trap” on the grounds that it takes women-headed households as a proxy for poor women. But women may be just as poor in intact households if they do not control their own incomes and, on the other side, many women-headed households are doing well economically. Reviewing early women in development approaches, neoliberal restructuring, and women’s “empowerment” efforts, Chant argues that research indicates that women’s capacity to command and allocate resources is equally or perhaps more important than women’s power to obtain resources. Women may actually choose to give up material resources in order to gain control of their own lives. Women invest more in their children, and data on younger generations in female-headed households “frequently reveal comparable, if not greater (and less gender-biased)
levels of nutrition, health and education.” Although not arguing against marriage, Chant notes that women who go it alone may be in a better position to “challenge the diverse factors that make them poor.” Women’s empowerment cannot be measured by using indicators that ignore women’s felt experiences.

Finally, Maruja Barrig looks at gender equity from the standpoint of a feminist consultant to programs carried out by local NGOs funded by European donors in the southern Andean region of Peru. She documents how the effort to implement gender guidelines has run up against the principle of support for indigenous cultures. Anthropologists committed to preserving Andean values contrast the moral purity of rural village life to the capitalist corruption of Peru’s cities, to which many Indians are forced to migrate by the lack of economic opportunities in the highlands.

Barrig’s interviews with several staff members show that local NGOs may accept gender guidelines (which are required by donors) but that they justify their failure to implement them on the grounds that the Western model of gender equality does not fit the Andean ideal of gender complementarity. The evidence of discrimination against Andean women is very clear (they lack the education, knowledge of Spanish, and spatial mobility that the men of the villages enjoy), but Barrig also asks how, given all the constraints, Andean women themselves can be given their voice.

Control of Resources and Livelihood

Both WID and GAD approaches have addressed women’s access to and control over resources that could increase their productivity and intrahousehold bargaining power. Practitioners have organized women to learn about their rights and to claim shares in countries where state holdings of land and other assets are being turned over to private ownership. The wave of privatizations in the 1990s, especially in former socialist economies, raised new issues about ownership and use rights. Do women in rural areas have property rights in land? How can urban and rural women retain ownership of their houses, which are an important form of capital and often a source of income? Inheritance of land and house is a particularly pressing issue in Africa, where conflicts between customary, religious, and civil law tend to favor men and impoverish women. Property rights are an integral and frequently overlooked component of human security, and the work that has been done on human security does not take gender sufficiently into account.

Gale Summerfield looks at the case of China, where incremental processes of
land privatization are having more complex gendered effects than previously recognized. As families reassert control over rural land that was collectivized after the revolution, some have argued that this reform seems to represent a return to the virilocal prerevolutionary pattern. Summerfield argues that this is not so obviously the case because, despite serious problems, new laws and greater opportunities for rural employment, migration, and sideline production give women options they did not have in the earlier period. At the same time, male migration is feminizing subsistence agriculture. Because rural housing was not collectivized, rural families invest more in their houses than in their land, which was generally allocated for a relatively short time and periodically reallocated, for example, when women left their natal village to live with their husband’s family. New laws provide longer tenure and thus encourage investment, but ending periodic reallocations will have potentially harmful implications for women.

Diana Lee-Smith and Catalina Hinchey Trujillo show how cooperation among different groups concerned about women’s access to property had an impact on the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and helped shape the UN-HABITAT’s Program of 2000–2001. In rural areas, where women traditionally had use rights to land and house, the growth of the cash economy has made it increasingly necessary for women to convert use rights into formal ownership. Few privatization programs have considered the impact of their programs on women, especially single women. Using Uganda as a case study, the authors argue that the issue is not only to make the laws more equitable but to enforce the laws already on the books. Studies must be done to address how property systems are gendered and also to challenge the cultural traditions that make it difficult for women to assert their legal rights.

Faranak Miraftab’s chapter looks at a project undertaken by the UN Center for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT). The study examined gender patterns in the access to professional knowledge and administrative power in the area of housing. Perhaps not surprisingly, the HABITAT team found that women were less well represented than men in the fields of planning and that there is an inverse relation between the number of women and the level of authority in most housing-related ministries. Because role differences are so ingrained, the team found that gender discrimination often went unobserved. The idea, for example, that an agency would give women maternity leave and time to breastfeed their children was taken by female employees as evidence that the agency was not discriminating against women, whether or not its policies took gender sufficiently into
account. Miraftab concludes that women were rarely in a position to have *final say* on housing issues in ways that could improve their secure access to housing, thus making the case (as the larger study does) for increased involvement of women in the process of making and implementing housing policy at all levels.

All three of these essays show that the relatively neglected issue of women’s control over land and housing is critically important. They show how a combination of factors—ranging from women’s organizations, privatization, international norms, domestic laws, and cultural practices—shape the conditions under which women’s property ownership and use rights are being raised, formulated into specific demands on relevant agencies, and translated into policies that can be implemented. As economies are increasingly marketized, this issue is becoming more significant for women.

Louise Fortmann addresses another consequence of gendered ownership when she looks at how women and men manage forest resources. Modern patterns of ownership are changing the conditions of land use. As private ownership displaces traditional use rights, women may lose access to tree products, for example, yet the prevalence of traditional values concerning women’s ownership may make it difficult for them to claim rights, even to the land they legally own. Using data from Zimbabwe, Fortmann shows that the fact that women were half as likely as men to plant trees on their homestead land could not be explained by differences in wealth or the kind of labor needed to manage the trees. Instead it was because women did not own the land and were much less certain than men that they would reap the products of their investment. Drawing on her work comparing forest management projects in the United States and in developing countries, Fortmann concludes that the tendency to see problems of community forestry management in the South as quite different from those in the North is misguided. Resource-dependent communities in both North and South share similar macrolevel constraints and benefit from thinking cooperatively about how to confront them. At the same time, “situated knowledges” are essential to effective interventions that will meet women’s needs.

Kirk Smith examines the serious environmental problem of indoor pollution. Cooking fuels that emit smoke and toxic fumes are common in poor households in many developing countries, and women and children are more exposed because they typically spend more hours in the house than men and do most of the cooking. Smith points out that acute lower respiratory infection (ALRI), which commonly leads to pneumonia that kills within a few hours, is one of the leading causes of death of children under five in developing countries. There is a prob-
able link between indoor pollution and alri, and many of the deaths could be prevented with proper ventilation and treatment, but adequate health care and research funds have not been allocated to the problem because it is not a headline-grabbing issue, unlike severe acute respiratory syndrome, which threatened to become an international epidemic in 2003. Smith’s chapter is based on his experience as a researcher in this field and on a project currently being carried out in Guatemala. He argues that a strategy of prevention (the installation of new, well-ventilated stoves) is effective and should complement the current strategy of intervention, treating respiratory infections after children have become ill.

Women’s Mobilizations and Power

How women’s mobilizations intersect with larger trends, such as globalization and the increasing impact of new communications technologies, is the focus that unites the chapters in the third section. In the first essay, Amara Pongsapich traces the impact of women’s movements on the international environmental agenda, through the Decade for Women and Beijing and the un environmental conferences. She then turns to her own country to assess how environmental issues have been addressed under conditions of globalization in Thailand. Although the Thai economic crisis was very hard on women workers, civil society movements have consolidated and expanded. Pongsapich provides several case studies of women-led local efforts to halt development projects that would have had detrimental environmental effects.

Pongsapich sees these women-led efforts as consistent with a global trend of “new social movements,” which are less committed to material ends and more oriented toward the quality of life. In her view, the “modernist paradigm” has emphasized industrialization and economic development, but grassroots people want a human-centered development paradigm that is respectful of nature. Donor agencies have recently put the emphasis on poverty, but fail to make the connection between women, poverty, and the environment. In an essay that is highly critical of globalization, Pongsapich concludes that women are turning their attention from issues of gender equity to issues of trade and investment.

Doe Mayer, Barbara Pillsbury, and Muadi Mukenge document the lessons of a five-year project funded by the Gates Foundation to provide women’s organizations access to information communication technology (ict; in this case, the Internet and e-mail) and to train them in how to develop effective communications strategies. Pillsbury and Meyer worked with 30 NGOs in Zambia, Zimbabwe,
and Uganda that had been identified through projects funded by the Global Fund for Women. Mukenge evaluated the project.

The project found that the successful use of information technology depended on several factors, including the hierarchy of the organization and the degree to which ICT could make a noticeable difference in the organization’s success, particularly its ability to attract foreign donors. The project also emphasized more traditional forms of communication and the need for NGOs to reach local organizations or networks to be effective at advocacy.

The problems faced by Women Connect! illustrate another theme of this volume. As Barrig emphasized in her discussion of NGOs working in the Andes, relations between Northern donors and Southern NGOs are often conflictive. From the perspective of the Southern NGOs, donor requirements can distort NGO agendas and produce complicated reporting processes that may waste valuable resources or produce a rhetorical agreement that is not reflected in project implementation. Pillsbury and Mayer show how this looks from the Northern perspective: the grant required that this initiative work on women’s reproductive health issues, especially HIV/AIDS, but that was rarely the top priority of the local NGOs. The need to meet the donor’s conditions affected which NGOs were chosen and how the projects were carried out, with Pillsbury and Mayer in the role of intermediaries.

Global connections have been shown as a reason for the success and survival of local NGOs. But the ties between local groups and their audiences are assumed rather than studied. If NGOs are to be autonomous and responsive, the role of local members and supporters is critical. The chapter by Mayer, Pillsbury, and Mukenge emphasizes the importance of “traditional” outreach strategies to connect groups with local audiences as well as the usefulness of the Internet to link groups transnationally and to access sources of information that can be repackaged for local use.

In the final chapter, Irene Tinker reflects on her experiences over several decades working with individuals, NGOs, scholars, and donors on issues of women in development. Tinker’s theme in this chapter is empowerment, not as a theoretical issue or an organizational goal, but as it “happened”—that is, as women’s mobilization was the often unintended result of initiatives intended to change the economic but not the gender status quo.

Tinker believes that early efforts to redirect economic resources helped women’s organizations to get started, and she recounts the effects of the UN De-
cade and Beijing (1995) on the growth and increasing power of women’s organizations. She looks at the current status of the broad range of issues in which she has engaged, from promoting Ester Boserup’s work and the Percy Amendment, which drew attention to the issues of women and development, to exploring the relationship between women, technology and the environment, street foods, and housing and land. She takes a close look at the relative effects of different microcredit programs. Returning to her original field of political science, Tinker discusses how different kinds of electoral systems, including gender quotas, are producing changes in political leadership in many countries, a process that works best, she argues, when government “insiders” are closely engaged with independent women’s movements and with activist women leaders on the “outside.” Tinker’s assessment of women’s organizing and its impact on policy is, like Irene Tinker herself, an equal mix of deep intellectual curiosity, constructive critique, and confidence that we can make change happen.

**COMMON THEMES AND NEW DIRECTIONS**

Several themes emerge from the creative tensions addressed in this volume. Changing institutions, controlling resources, and mobilizing for power are not issues only in developing countries; they are challenges in all countries. A truly interdisciplinary perspective is needed to address the concerns of political participation, economic fundamentals, and the expanded capabilities that stress quality of life as well as material measures of what women value (see C. Graham 2003). The concern to recognize different goals and practices that drives the postcolonialist focus on equity (rather than equality) must be integrated with policy- and action-oriented efforts to improve women’s lives (see Benería 2003; Zein-Elabdin and Charusheela 2004). These chapters underline the need to maintain a focus on women while keeping gender power relations in mind.

Crossing borders is also a recurring theme. Globalization and the need to bring lessons from the South to the North suggest the necessity of an approach sensitive to transnational issues. Migration, technology, resource management, employment patterns, and political mobilization are important examples. Yet the permeability of borders and the impressive rise of women’s movements do not suggest giving up on the state; on the contrary, state capacity to regulate markets, provide social insurance, and criminalize various forms of trafficking in women remains a critical issue for women.

Another theme is the way globalization appears to be transferring risk to those
least able to cope with structural changes and survive the inevitable cycles that occur, even when the growth trend is positive. The human costs of structural adjustment in Africa and the Latin American and Asian currency crises of the 1990s show that we cannot assume that “development” is a smooth or irreversible process, even in those countries that are seen as the most successful cases of reform. In the 1990s, the end of the Cold War led to discussions of human security as a peace dividend (UNDP 1994), but more recent political and economic tensions have prompted WID and GAD advocates to argue for a human security approach as an alternative to militarization. Behind the idea of human security is the need to develop effective policies to prepare women to survive and compete in increasingly marketized economies in an increasingly globalized world. It brings together the discourses of those who stress a rights-based approach to development with those who emphasize cultural pluralism and who argue that all women do not necessarily share the same interests and goals.

Transition, restructuring, and globalization have been accompanied by recurring economic crises that have not been adequately addressed. The neoliberal development model puts overwhelming stress on growth rather than equity and on markets rather than states. Although most who work on global financial and economic models omit gender issues, feminist critics have made some progress in bringing gender into the discussions of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals, trade, and global public goods (see Cagatay et al. 1995). Gender budgets, labor policies in free trade zones, and transnational caring labor (such as the U.S. importation of nurses and the employment of immigrant women as household help) are among the issues being addressed (e.g., Ferber and Nelson 2003; see also Kardam 2004).

Another common theme is the role of women’s movements. Women’s organizations are both local and embedded in cross-national networks that provide support and resources to make local action more effective. Women’s growing access to political power, through gender quotas in some cases and through the appointment of women to top administrative positions, is a new resource that could be linked more closely to development programs and negotiate the growing tensions between gender equity and traditional laws and customs.

Persistent inequalities demand continuous reevaluation and daring experiments. The call for gender equity is fundamental and transformative, but the barriers to achieving this goal are formidable, as thirty years of efforts to promote women and gender in development illustrate only too often. Earlier rejection
of efforts to “integrate women” met with bureaucratic resistance. The adoption of gender strategies was a victory at the level of policy but less reliably at the level of practices. In the 1990s, private investment greatly outpaced public capital flows, reducing the reach of gender equity policies, which can shape bureaucratic but not market behavior, and making macroeconomic policies the critical focus.

Today, we think the field that addresses women, gender, development, and globalization needs to renew and regroup. Efforts to reform bureaucratic practices and link them to women’s self-empowerment must be accompanied by investing more attention in how to modify the regulatory and ideological contexts in which macroeconomic and trade policies are conceived and carried out. This will require new levels of interdisciplinary and cross-national cooperation and a sense of urgency. We think now is the time.

NOTES

2. For a defense of these policies, see Frum and Perle (2004). For a critique, see Dalder and Lindsay (2003).
3. A striking example is the Bush administration’s call for 40 percent representation of women in the new Iraqi parliament. (“Iraqi Council to Debate Plan for Transition” 2004, 1). Women’s representation is a means to avoid the potential institutionalization of a regime dominated by clerics and the adoption of sharia law, but it is likely to produce local resentment and may put women leaders in an untenable position; at this writing one American woman who was working on setting up women’s centers has died. Cohn, Kinsella, and Gibbings (2004, 138) argue that the Security Council resolution on women’s rights in Iraq may be seen as positive support for “women’s rightful inclusion,” but also a “tool to justify military occupation on behalf of ‘liberating’ women.”
5. There is an excellent and growing literature on institutions (see Jaquette and Staudt in this volume).
6. Because Irene Tinker has been so influential in shaping the field of women, gender, and development and because a full list of her publications hasn’t appeared elsewhere, we list her complete works at the end of the bibliography.
7. Much has been written on local and global connections, but for a theoretically and empirically rich review, see Brysk (2000).