

APWLD
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Political realities regarding Development Aid in the area of Women's Human Rights

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As Latin American and Caribbean women we feel we are in the position to affirm that presently we are undergoing very important historical periods in our region, considering that in the majority of our countries –each of them with their own particularities and characteristics- we are facing the challenge to improve the prevailing standards in relation to women's rights based on the principle that democracy is built on a basis of equality as a main ethical component of what we understand as social justice.

The commitments obtained as a result of the Beijing Platform are still far away from our realities and defeats are frankly unacceptable. Even the programmes that should have been used to sustain basic actions based on the Platform are not yet considered a priority in many of our countries, in different areas such as economic policies, poverty, health, violence, political power, environment, women's human rights and the problems regarding the girl-child which are always postponed.

The rights and demands of women remain like eternally hidden under male predominance and hardly considered when development policies are discussed. We have seen this in different situations covering scenarios of political restrictions and economies developed on a basis of inequality such as the case of Dominican Republic, the consecutive political crisis of Haiti with its economic impact, the impunity regarding crime or misappropriations and increasing corruption, to more progressive situations like the interesting political processes in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador.

Therefore we have to ask which is the main factor that is going to determine the focus of the development policies, where is the challenge that we have to FACE to really affirm that women are full participants in the development processes, where their special needs and expectations are really a component of these policies.

There is a main assertion that we have to consider as a departure point: the policies which not only fail to recognize the differences between men and women in relation to power, needs and access to resources but overlook at them, are policies that contribute to the perpetuation of exclusion and to make differences wider.

Following this statement and considering the objectives of our event I want to propose to focus on the following issues:

1. To ratify the analytical perspective that may be behind our argument which is to depart from a concept of development for the people, from the people based on equality.

2. To examine our political realities under the lens of the predominant development model where the concepts of development and poverty are structured without considering rights and therefore excluding empowerment and participation.
3. To watch the basic elements that come out from our daily lives such as the dimension and relevance of the participation of women in employment and generation of income and the spaces where decisions have to be made in order to improve the poor conditions of living and the hierarchical relations existing between men and women;
4. To sharpen our look towards aid for development analyzing factors and political conditionality formulated by the donor countries towards the beneficiaries, examining the positions and subservient attitudes of our governments in relation to this kind of external domination through systems of payment of our debts, imposition of neo-liberal models, globalization, technological dependence and oil requirements. At the same time we must observe the diverse stand of the social organizations which include the ones which are supportive and similar to the attitude of those subordinated governments- and the ones which hold a different positions and work from the perspective of a transforming feminism.

Taking into consideration these 4 issues, we must try to understand how ideologically structures are created for people to remain blind to their realities.

I am proposing an analytical perspective of development which questions the visions for the validation of social relations through the logic of the creation of capitalist centres of production and a neo-liberal model of domination which has not only impoverished our people but continues to make gaps wider, breaking all the records regarding the phenomena of feminization of poverty..

I think that even though a focus on rights from the perspective of women's needs cannot be separated from the rights which were historically denied to the impoverished and exploited classes , it encourages us to search for a full political and social recognition without restrictions, claiming for the participation to be part of a transforming cultural change of the relations between men and women, sustained on autonomy, breaking up with the patriarchal model, starting a non-hierarchical structure of the condition of women.

The interests established on the basis development aid must be put under scrutiny to visualize the limits and scopes of such cooperation and analyze why and for what offers are made and why in other cases proposals are rejected. We must discuss how to act in relation to the funding from different agencies, in relation to the sovereignty of our peoples and the autonomy of our organizations if besides they are all conditioned to the acceptance of neo-liberal impoverishing programmes.

W must define attitudes in front of concrete projects that may provide temporal benefit to one organization but may create a negative impact in relation to our social processes; how to position ourselves before conditions generated because of lack

of funding and define long term processes, identify those which may be considered positive in order to create organizational capacities and contribute to empowerment or if these are projects are designed to impose agendas .

We must continue to examine the perspectives applied for big cooperation agreements, where the corporation interests of the European Union stands and the direction where their Government are pointing to; the same with North American NGOs, the WTO and the regional or sub-regional submits.

I suggest to start thinking about possibilities of analysis departing from an agreement which can be generated from our network o the Beijing Platform itself and ones as a result of the Cairo and Vienna conferences. Taking into consideration that certain commitments have not yet been implemented we can make them our own and transform them into actions, without leaving behind of course our efforts for the transformation of our own societies..

All this is based on the firm belief that a neo-liberal structure denies development possibilities for affected classes and different sectors such as migrants and minorities often excluded: the more vulnerability and discrimination they create to the social components, the more deteriorating their polices will finally be.

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