Global Crisis, Development and the Emergence of Women Voices

Crisis global, desarrollo y la aparición de las voces de las mujeres

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Abstract. Since the Seventies, the theme of development has gathered increasing attention from women, both of industrialized Countries and the Global South. This paper aims to provide a historical reconstruction of *how* and *why* women participated to this process, as well as to what extent they influenced the mainstream sector of development and defined alternative and more radical positions.

Women academics, activists and development practitioners entered the development process after a pairs of decades: since the post-World War II the "development discourse" has been shaping the international agenda, the objectives to be realized for the improvement of life conditions, as well as the common perception of poverty and the concept of crisis. Until the Eighties, the development theorists assumed as universal the vision of woman –with related interpretation of their needs and roles– commonly shared in Europe and United States. In reply to this, emerged a the own position from the Global South, as a result of a intellectual emancipatory effort. This was a milestone for the transnational movement that encompasses different considerations of women's roles in development.

The concept of gender empowerment, that emerged within the current alternative movements, was later assumed at the Beijing Conference. This paper examines the different declinations this concept has assumed since then.

Keywords: development, international cooperation, agency, gender empowerment, gender equality, feminism.

Resumen. Desde los años setenta, el tema del desarrollo ha atraído la atención de las mujeres, tanto de los países industrializados como de los países del Sur. La intención de este estudio es dar una visión sobre la reconstrucción histórica de *cómo y por qué* las mujeres participaron en este proceso, así como en qué medida influyeron en el sector de desarrollo dominante y definieron posiciones alternativas y más radicales.

Las mujeres académicas, activistas y profesionales del desarrollo entraron en el proceso de formulación de desarrollo después de dos décadas. Desde la posguerra, el "discurso del de-

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sarrollo" ha ido configurando la agenda internacional, los objetivos a alcanzar para la mejora de las condiciones de vida como la percepción común de la pobreza y el concepto de crisis. Hasta los años ochenta, los teóricos del desarrollo asumieron como universal la visión de la mujer –y la interpretación de sus necesidades y roles– comúnmente compartida en Europa y Estados Unidos. En respuesta a esto, surgió una postura propia del Sur Global, como resultado de un esfuerzo emancipatorio intelectual. Este fue un hito para el movimiento transnacional y feminista que abarca diferentes consideraciones del papel de las mujeres en el desarrollo.

El concepto de *women empowerment*, surgido dentro de los movimientos alternativos actuales, fue más tarde asumido por la Conferencia de Beijing. En este trabajo se examinan las diferentes declinaciones que este concepto ha asumido desde entonces.

Palabras clave: desarrollo, cooperación internacional, agencia, empoderamiento de la mujer, igualdad de género y feminismo.

Methodology

The purpose of this analysis is to trace the changes in the nexus between global crisis, women and development theories from the establishment of the Women's Decade by the UN. In order to do so, the periodization chosen is the decade, for two reasons: first, it reflects the periodical deadlines that the United Nations adopted for the initiatives for women; secondly, the decades in object identify the different trends that also the development theory and policies had since the end of World-War second. The approach chosen is multidisciplinary and are included disciplines like history, international law, economics and development theory. The main theoretical frameworks used are the structuralist critics and the postcolonial studies.

1. The post second World War

The relationship between women and economics has for a long time been a mutual-refusal relationship, at least within theoretical frameworks. Like some other fields of power, also economic thinking has longer been tailored by and for men exclusively. Whereas at the practical level women were often involved in the economic sector (it must be specified that, sadly, this was not a matter of free choice for women, and their economic role was defined by the trends of labor sexualisation in a given society and at a given time), at the dominant theoretical level, women were totally absent and the economic paradigms that shaped the resources utilisation did not match the actual involvement of labour-force. This is clearly demonstrated in expressions like "the feminisation of poverty" that, by referring to the worsening of women's economic conditions during the Eighties, could imply that poverty among women and the asymmetry between poor women and men, was something new.

The emergence of women in development discourse was therefore not automatic, but rather a process provoked and influenced by the changes in societies and, especially, in the social construction of gender and its perception. Tinker (Tinker 2004) highlighted that:

"Women were totally invisible in the liberal economic development paradigm predominant in the 1950s, for three basic reasons. First, the worldview prevailing in Europe and the United States in the post-World War II era which assumed women did not work was incorrectly perceived as universal. Secondly, the economic constructs based on this assumption proposed the household as an economic unit whose members were well served by its patriarch. Finally, this lack of cultural variability could be traced to some extent to inaccurate information about women's economic roles and gender relationships in developing countries".

Moser (Moser, 1970) emphasized that during the 1950s and 1960s, development organizations perceived the economic role of women only as home makers, bearers and rearers of children and housewives, i.e. In terms of their reproduction activities. As the social construction of gender was assumed as the given basis of development theories, programs and projects targeted to women were focused on family planning and "population control", mother and child health care, nutrition and home economics.

Whereas development was seen as an enhancement of the women's role, this remained limited within an assumed fixed role: of home makers, wives and mothers. That phase of development policies was defined by Caroline Moser (Moser, 1970) as the "welfare approach".

At this point, two main factors challenged the construct at the base of "welfare approach": the changes made in the society, as women shifted to new roles and positions, and the first results of the development programs. The change women made in society after World War II, both in post colonial Countries and in the industrialized ones, was determinant in challenging the construct at the base of the welfare approach. According to Tinker (Tinker 2004): "the rhetoric of democracy and equality espoused during the war resonated in both former Colonies and in industrial Countries. Constitution of newly independent countries granted women's suffrage. [...] Many women were given high level positions at home and in the United Nations" (Tinker 2004). Women's movements increasingly challenged the social construction of gender on which development projects were based. This was a complex process that encompassed the social changes of the gender roles and labour division, a renewed participation of NGOs and women within the UN world Conference and the academic as well as practitioners involvement.

With reference to the second factor, during the Seventies, researchers and development institutions started to divulge first evaluation of results of programs implemented. It was showed the benefits from the development paradigm were not automatic nor equal. Feminist critiques of the concept of development emerged in the 1970s, about twenty years after the new global North-South hierarchy was launched by the United States president, Harry Truman. Following the 1968 uprisings, the 1970s produced the "Second Wave" of the feminist movement, not only in the industrialised countries but also to a great extent in Latin America. This included left-wing counter-cultural feminism as much as liberal feminism.

2. The Ester Boserup's influence and the birth of Women In Development (WID) Approach

The publication of "Woman's Role in Economic Development" by the Danish Economist Ester Boserup in 1970 was an important milestone in shaping the approach of development programs. Based on empirical research carried out in Africa, the author showed that women considerably contributed to the productive sectors, particularly in agriculture. By analysing the effects of the introduction of cash crops into subsistence economics, she revealed that women's major role in productive activities was undertook within the household and the community. She showed that aid policies were reflecting the asymmetric distribution of resources, as was training, technology and finance, that were geared towards men and not to women. Boserup's work highlighted the importance of the dimension of gender within the process of development, showing the importance of the intra-household dynamics, as they significantly influenced the results of economic programs. The traditional patterns of control over capital and land, as well as the relationships of power between men and women were, therefore, assumptions to be included into the evaluation of the results of programs. These not-merely economic assumptions, could explain why men benefited from the modern agriculture, but women's benefit was not automatic (Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler,Wieringa, 1994). Boserup and her contemporaries contributed to the establishment of a Women In Development as an area of study and to the formulation of policies to translate their findings into development practice.

Ten years after the United Nations Development Decade (1960-1970) the Women In Development approach (WID) emerged. The term was coined in the early 1970s by the Women's Committee of the Washington, DC, Chapter of the Society for International Development (SID); later, it was adopted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). WID approach was institutionalized first as separate sections, departments, project components and further within the donor countries development bureaucracy; after the Nairobi Conference, women's bureaus and Ministries were also established in the countries of the South.

The underlying rationale of WID was that women were "an untapped resource who can provide an economic contribution to development" (Moser 1993). USAID, together, with the Harvard Institute of International Development, produced a methodology to identify how women have been left out of development on these grounds and concluded that 'women were key actors in the economic system, yet their neglect in development plans had left untapped a potentially large contribution' (Overholt et al. 1984:3). This concept also argued that women, because they are socialised as carers which involves a greater sense of responsibility to others, would be better resource administrators, better savers, and they were even considered a "so-far unexploited resource for greater efficiency in development" (Jackson, 1992: 89). With the introduction of the concept of WID, large numbers of NGOs emerged, geared to helping women access funds earmarked for development, and be included as programme beneficiaries, which in the future would have a

"women component". This led to a series of programmes specifically for women, such as microcredit, and to a certain recognition of women's work in the productive economy.

Though WID had not generated a homogeneous policy, Levy (Levy, 1996) distingushed common threads that characterized the approach. First, women were considered as an analytical and operational category; second, the organisational form of the categoy "women" led to the establishment of separate structures - Ministries of Departements of Women's Affairs,National Women's Commissions; third, these separate structures focused on women, as if women were not considered by other public institutions; the primary means of intervention of these separate structures were women-specific policies, programmes or projects; generally, these separate structures have been severely under-resourced, relative to other government expenditure. The ultimate thread Levy has found is the impact of the WID approach: on the one hand, WID has been crucial in defining a women's sector within development policies; on the other hand, WID has remained marginal to the mainstream development activities of governments (Levy, 1991; Moser, 1993; Kabeer, 1999).

According to Moser (Moser, 1993), as the WID approach assumed that development processes would proceed much better if women were fully incorporated into them (instead of being left to use their time 'unproductively'), it did not question the consensus between liberal political ideologies and neoclassical economics as the basis of the paradigm of modernization through development policies. Though some WID structures carried out few successful activities, both in-country and at the international level, the influence it had on the regular activities of international and government agencies, was minimal. Moser stated that: "The extent to which women's roles are recognised and incorporated into actions is either absent or is present in an *ad hoc* or an `add-on' way. In retrospect, it is clear that while WID has institutionalised itself, it has not institutionalised women in the practices of development agencies." Whether the expected results were achieved or not, the WID approach was criticised by feminists for its methodology. The WID became to be seen as an extension of that ethnocentrism and colonization mindset that was actually ingrained in the foreign politics of the industrialized countries, as well as their development policies.

In the second half of the 1970s another current of thought emerged: "Women and Development" (WAD) rooted in Marxist feminism and the theory of dependence. WAD assumes the development of the North as the fruit of the exploitation of the South (Gudynas).

Critics of both concepts, question that "women have always been an integral part of development in their societies – not just since 1970– and that their work, at home and elsewhere, has always helped sustain societies, and that this integration of women merely helped sustain international structures of inequality". The WAD approach is more analytical than the WID concept, but does not make concrete proposals for development policies, unlike the WID. The WAD hardly interprets gender relations within social classes and gives little attention to gender subordination, putting greater emphasis on unequal class structures and oppressive international structures. It stresses productive work at the expense of women's reproductive work. Like WID, WAD focused on income generation of women, without considering what this meant for them in terms of 'double-day' work. It has been argued (Rathgeber, 1990) that, this feminist theory about development, just like the andro-

centric theories of dependence, modernity and the political economy, saw the caring work as part of the "private" domain, which does not produce value and hence is beyond the purposes of development . During this period, Important steps to a new participation of women within the international debates on development, were taken a the UN forum since the Seventies. The UN opened to national delegations and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in a consultative status and at the 1974 UN World Conference on Population and the World Food Conference held in Rome, a forum was arranged. In this occasion, women managed to include women in pertinent sections of the conference document; thanks to women staff at the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women's roles in food production were recognized (Pietila and Vickers 1990: 82–3). Later on, the World Conference on the International Women's Year of 1975 provided the first opportunity to discuss the impact of development on women. In this way, the UN Conferences became an "incubator for a global women's movement" (Walker 2004).

3. From WID to Gender And Development (GAD) Approach

During the Eighties, the category of "gender" came to the force of globalisation debates (Valcárcel, 2008). It has to be emphasized that the Eighties were marked by the debt crisis, structural adjustment programs and neo-liberalism globalization. Women were often the hardest hit by structural adjustment cutbacks in health and education. The American economist, Diane Pearce, introduced in 1978 the term "Feminization of poverty" with reference to the increase in the women's labour-force and the decrease in their earnings related to those of men. The demand for cheap labour and female labour became synonymous. Only a small minority of women had benefited from the efforts to reduce discrimination and the improvements in the situation of women in the developing world had been marginal at best. In short, the objectives of the second half of the United Nations Decade for Women had not been met. Researches showed that when women increase income, men often reduce their contribution to family support (Dwyer and Bruce 1988; Blumberg 1991; Sen, 1990). Formal sector jobs paid women less than men; women in the informal sector were often compelled by household responsibilities to work fewer hours (Molyneux, 1985; Tinker 1991). The debate over the informal sector highlighted the gender roles, whereas industries around the world began to "informalize" their workforce (Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989; Rakowski 1994). Such research revealed that resources critical for women's empowerment, such as home ownership or rights on land, were kept locked by traditional laws that privileged men by maintaining women's subordination. Women's movements expanded beyond economics consideration.

According to this shift, the WID evolved into the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. It has been stressed (Moser 1993) that these terms are all too often used synonymously, yet in their original meaning they are representative of very different theoretical positions with regard to the problems experienced by low-income women in the Global South. Consequently, they differ fundamentally in terms of their focus, with important im-

plications for both their policies and planning procedures (Moser 1993). The term "gender" became in use among scholars and practitioners since the Eighties. The International Development Research Center (IDRC) was perhaps the first development agency to adopt the term in its policy statements (Tinker 2004). When postcolonial critics entered within the theme of GAD, it put at the center of concern the control of women over their own lives; since there, women autonomy, as a means to gaining control over their lives, bodies and sexuality, was considered as the prerequisite to a wide transformation of patriarchal societies – both of the industrialized and the Global South.

GAD is a constructivist approach which starts from a comprehensive perspective. By looking at the whole of the political, economic and social organisation of society, the GAD approach assumes that economic change alone cannot empower women. Devaki Jain, emphasized that: "All work did not necessarily empower women... it took something more, and that seemed to be feminist leadership" (Jain 2004:132). From that perspective, it is questioned the policy of a microcredit which is given without identifying the dynamics of the domination that affects poor women beneficiaries. In the framework of the monetization expansion and the consequently increase of micro-lendings, it resulted that more successful were projects assisting women who were already working. The Self-Employed Women's Associations (SEWA), founded by Ela Bhatt in Ahmedabad, India, in 1974, aim at organizing women from their existing jobs, insisting they become literate and trained to become leaders.

The GAD objective is for full equality of women within the framework of economic development, by considering gender roles and relations in what has been called the "gender system". Within this conceptual framework, Caroline Moser developed a differentiated gender planning model for development programs and projects which distinguishes between women's practical and strategic needs. Practical needs include access to basic services and goods; while strategic needs are those that question the subordination in the gender system depending on the specific social context: they go from the right to the same salary for the same job, to the freedom in the choice of the number of children they have. This model is widely adopted by major international organizations and is still part of the dominant approach to development planning.

Both the socialist feminist perspective of the 1980s and the GAD approach reject the dichotomy between the public and private spheres, and focus their attention on the oppression of women in the family or home, which is the basis of marital relations. Both see women as agents of change, rather than recipients of development, and emphasize the need for women to be organized and build up more effective political representation. It was then that feminists began to join up the gender, race and class forms of oppression in their analyses and link them to a critique of development (Maguire, 1984; Sen y Grown, 1988).

The UN international conferences also served as forums where the divisions based on race and class, in and between the Global North and the Global South, resurfaced (Ewig and Ferree 2012). The growing disconnection between Northern feminists, especially Americans like Betty Friedan, and women from the South was highlighted at the Mexico City NGO Tribune and caused by the American feminists' assumption of the universality of the women's issue (Tinker 2004). Furthermore, the Copenhagen Conference of 1980

revealed how differently the improvement of women could be conceptualized. As the different women's voices emerged, the women's social movement became a transnational network encompassing class, religious, and geographic variations that could offer what Braidotti called "diversity of vision" on the world. (Braidotti, 1991). Women from the Global South expressed their own opinions about the development policies. A series of research papers written by women from the South was financed in order to balance the dominance of documentation by Northern scholars. It emerged that the integration of the women in development process, far from benefitting women, actually made them work harder (Lucille Mair 1986). According to Elise Boulding (Boulding, 1991) "the integration in such work order only increased women's dependency". Lycklama à Nijeohlt (1987) pointed out that the goal of integration of women into the mainstream of development "left no choice about the kind of development women wanted: it was assumed that women wanted to be integrated into a patriarchal Western mode of development". By criticizing the category of "third World women", the Indian feminist Chandra Talpade Mohanty, revealed the underlying thought of what a "First world" made of women that, differently from the Third, were subject to history. Ethnocentric universalist feminism tends to judge the religious, family, legal and economic structures of the cultures of the South, by assuming western standards as the reference point. By considering these structures as "under-developed", the assumption was that the "development" model proposed by Western institutions was the only way to undertake. Mohanty suggested the concept of transcultural feminism based on feminist solidarity, in order to replace the framework of international interaction that is rooted in colonialist hierarchies, racial stereotypes and natural resources exploitation.

4. Creating Alternatives: the structuralist critics and the ecofeminism

At the Nairobi Women's conference in 1985, the book "Development Alternatives with Women for a new Era: Development, Crisis, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspective", by Sen and Grown was presented. The text was written after a series of meetings among women scholars from the Global South, inspired by the Devaki Jain's paper "Development as if Women Mattered: can Women Build a New Paradigm?". The Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) met for the first time in 1984 and since then, it has played an important role in stimulating alternative visions of development from a feminist perspective. DAWN basically challenges the assumption that the problem was simply that women did not participate enough in an otherwise positive process of development and economic growth. The movement argues that indebtedness and consumerism have aggravated the crises in which women of the South have fallen due to structural adjustment and neoliberal policies. DAWN assumes that an agenda gender-oriented should be based on: a framework of justice and rights to eliminate inequality and discrimination; addressing structural obstacles at the global level to make progress in justice and the guarantee of rights; strengthening alternative development actions and mechanisms of public funding; meaningful participation of social organizations, autono-

my and strengthening of multilateral system. They also argued that the integration of the women into development, resulted in an over-exploitation of women and that "this is actually a colonial transfer of a multitude of Western epistemological preconceptions to the concrete contexts of the South". According to the DAWN redefinition, development is: "the socially responsible management and use of resources, the elimination of gender subordination and social inequality and the organizational restructuring that can bring these about" (Sen and Grown, 1987). The DAWN perspective recalls on the responsibilities that the Industrialized Countries have to the impoverishment of the Global South. Caroline Moser (Moser 1993) has called DAWN's approach, and that of other groups mainly of the Global South, the "Empowerment Approach". According to her assumption, DAWN's approach has not been widely adopted by many governments and aid agencies because of its potential to question both local and global patriarchal structures.

Since the 1990s, in the postcolonial feminism, some feminists in the South have strongly criticized both essentialist feminism and the attempts of hegemonic feminism and an ethnocentric trend anchored in the North to homogenize the concept of "Third World women" as one group of development beneficiaries. 0O9i86\1Debate on essentialism was very much oriented towards Ecofeminism. It arose as a counterculture in the 1970s. This movement highlighted the degrading exploitation that the patriarchy established both on women and nature. It also questioned the paradigm of progress of "real socialism" and movements within the communist parties, by assuming that they have the same consideration for capitalism as they do for nature and the environment.

The essentialistic current of ecofeminism assumes that there is a feminine essence that places women closer to nature than men. According to this, "Women appear to be a kind of hope for humanity and the conservation of nature on the basis of the supposition that because of their very essence, women are more likely to protect living beings and have an ethic of care, which originates from the maternal instinct" (Guinaga, M; Lang, M; Mokrani, D; Santillana, A. 2013).

According to another trend of ecofeminism, like Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies and Bina Agarwal, the origin of women's greater compatibility with nature is rooted in the social and historical construction of gender, which is specific to each culture. They consider "development" as a Western colonization strategy: "recent trends are geared towards an environmental apartheid in which, through the global policy established by the 'Holy Trinity', Western multinational companies, backed by the governments of economically powerful countries, try to conserve the economic power of the North and the wasteful life of the rich. In order to do so, they export the environmental costs to the Third World. (Shiva, 2001:1).

The women's body is central in the thought of the German ecofeminist Maria Mies. She considers bodies as a third colony, additional to colonized states and subjected nature. From this, Mies focuses on the research of complex forms of decolonization and the dismantling of patriarchal relations. It cannot be separated from a parallel critique of the sexual division of labour which (re)produces power and wealth based on the positions of gender, race and class. Mies questioned the social sciences as "they conceal the preconditions that make wage labour possible, but do not figure explicitly in the capitalist model

of accumulation: caring, women's reproduction, the work of small farmers that guarantee subsistence or that local basic needs are met (often left to women with men absent as migrant workers)" (Guinaga, M; Lang, M; Mokrani, D; Santillana, A. 2013). The author highlights how these conditions are crucial as they provide that support without which capitalist accumulation could not even exist; yet, they are kept invisible through the hegemonic discourse and economic policies that support a consideration of them as "free".

The Brazilian ecofeminist Ivone Gebara, focused her critics to development as a hegemonic discourse for modernity. According to her analysis, modernity introduces the torture of witches and the establishment of the scientific method. For Gebara, women and nature suffer the same oppression: the oppressed women, subordinated to marital relations and to the family; nature, dominated by the masculine scientific spirit. The discourses of the dominating strategies encompasses therefore politics, philosophy and theology of modern Western thought from the advent of capitalism. Ecofeminism hence involves proposing that the destiny of the oppressed is intimately linked to the destiny of the Earth: "Every appeal to social justice implies eco-justice" (Guinaga, M; 2013).

Shiva's and her contemporaries fundamental contribution relies on the main challenge to the epistemological assumptions underlying the dominant development model. She questioned the Western model of development as the only possible model; thanks to her work, it is possible to rethink poverty in terms of values and perceptions: what is real material poverty and what is culturally perceived as poverty. The work of Shiva has also influenced Northern environmental movements.

Such a trans-national movement of different thoughts about women's roles in development and the environment found great space at the UN International Conferences on Development. The culmination of women's demands for equality came at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights when the Body adopted the statements that the human rights of women are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights. Tinker (Tinker, 2004) highlights that this declaration "was a frontal attack on patriarchy because it implies that existing laws which privilege men and maintain the subordination of women must be eradicated" (Tinker, 2004).

At the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the concept of gender was highly recognized. It was assumed that the entire structure of society and all relations between men and women within it, had to be re-evaluated. By adopting the Beijing Platform for Action, governments committed themselves to the effective inclusion of a gender dimension throughout all their institutions, policies, planning and decision-making. The presence and influence of NGOs, one of the most active forces in the drive for gender equality, had increased dramatically since the Mexico City Conference in 1975. In Beijing, NGOs – whose number of participants to over 47,000 broke all records - had directly influenced the content of the Platform for Action. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action therefore adopted, was in essence an agenda for women's empowerment.

Beijing 1995 also represented the culmination of women's demands for political participation. The platform of Action requires that 30 percent of all decision-making positions in governments should be allocated to women. Much debate questions the relation-

ship between more women legislators and the goal of empowerment. In the case that the goal would be equality, an increase in number constitutes success but aiming at the implementation of a feminist agenda, which would empower women 's conditions, means to consider how women candidates are selected and who supports them, as highlighted by Tinker (2004); therefore, a more accurate method indicating empowerment, would be to consider the impact of legislation passed by elective bodies, and also the numbers of politically active women's organizations. According to Tinker (Tinker, 2004):

> "The party list system is considered the most efficacious method for ensuring that women are elected to legislatures. Globally, about 35% of countries use a variation of this electoral system. Parties determine who is on the list. In the closed list system, candidates are selected from the list of the winning party's list in seriatim: if every other candidate were a woman, the party would have elected 50% female legislators. However, many countries utilize an open list system: symbolic men or women may head the list, but voters have no guarantee which candidates will be selected by party leaders to serve". (Tinker, 2004).

Overall, "women's representation has not altered the neoliberal rules of the game." (Jaquette 2003). Along with gender, Beijing officially used the concept of *empowerment*. This term was clearly expressed in the above mentioned study of the DAWN "Development Crisis and Alternative Visions" (Grown, Sen: 1987); whereas its underlying rationale was to free the voices of low-income women from the South in order to promote change against sexual discrimination, but also against discrimination by class and race. Subjectivity and women's awareness, to be acquired through collective actions against subordination, were assumed as the critical tools that would have enabled women to positively influence their own conditions and environment (Pomeranzi, 1996). Kabeer (Kabeer 1999) highlighted that "empowerment" not only expressed the political subjectivity of women against traditional patriarchal system, but it also served to contrast "gender equality" which had not questioned all the reasons at the bases of male dominance and that demonstrated to be supportive of some neo-liberal requirements of the Eighties. Both the Political Declaration and the Platform of Beijing revealed the different ambitions underlying the conceptualization of empowerment. Gender equality aimed at the inclusion of women in governmental systems, by underlining the Public responsibilities towards women's rights; whilst the DAWN approach assumed that women were to be supported in their fights within their different forms of oppression by political, economic and cultural "institutions" - from the familiar organizations to the markets and educational and informational systems (Pomeranzi).

5. The issue of measuring empowerment

Once the empowerment was officially assumed as an institutional objective, its dimensions started to be measured. The Human Development Report of UNDP in 1995, elaborated the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empor Measure

(GEM). Both these indexes are centred on economic and institutional criteria; that indicates how different the interpretation of empowerment by development agencies is from that originally promoted by DAWN. Pomeranzi highlighted that the implementation of Moser's gender pianification, based on basic and strategic needs, already deprived empowerment of its full meaning. IThe attempt at implementing gender mainstreaming throughout development policies was influenced by the several crises that reshaped the international cooperation for development. In the framework of the frequent invocations of the emergency interventions, such as in the crisis of former Yugoslavia (1991) and Rwanda (1994), the image of women as victims of violence and ethnic rapes prevailed. Whereas women became the symbols of the geo-political emergency, the respect of rights were instrumentally used as indicators of "civil status", within the fight against fundamentalisms. Gender was therefore related to the new concept of Human Security[1].The conceptual framework of the Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, clearly reveals this shift of focus on the consideration of women as a security related issue. The integration of the gender perspective in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building is fully compliant with the conceptualization of empower as gender-equality.

Conclusions

Since 1975 the United Nations has convened four world conferences on women. This has contributed to bringing the discussion about gender to the very centre of the global agenda, mostly in terms of gender equality. It has to be stressed that the United Nation Charter is considered the first international legal document that affirmed the equality of all human beings, or that specifically targeted sex as a basis for discrimination, by referring to the "equal rights of men and women", the Organization declares "faith in fundamental human rights" and the "dignity and worth of the human person". As Tinker (Tinker 2004) argued, the story of women and international cooperation for development is a story of women organizing to challenge the development paradigm. For over fifty years, women have influenced development agencies to include women's concerns, and formed a global social movement that has altered gender relations throughout the world. Development policies today have a series of indicators to show the situation of women, such as gender-sensitive budgeting. Yet, the question of patriarchal power relations within the family, the productivity of care and conditions to other political or economic spheres are underestimated, and GDP is used as the primary indicator. As highlighted by Kabeer, (Kabeer 1999), empowerment is not only about addressing immediate inequalities faced by women but also changes in consciousness and agency that challenge patriarchal structures.

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[1] The ending of the Cold War reconfigured the relationship of States and the international community to the concept of security. The traditional concept had been focused on defending national territory against outside aggression; now security is analyzed from the human perspective and in terms of protecting civilians. The new concept of security, inspired by the fact that 90 percent of war and conflict victims were civilians, went beyond State security to take on a holistic perspective centred on the prevention of human rights violations, the protection of civilians from organized violence, and civilian experiences during conflicts. (Nduwimana, 2000).

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