

# The European NGDO Debate on Population and Development

*Report on WIDE-LC Seminar on Population and Development*

*held in Brussels, February 21-22, 1994*  
**Fundação Guizar o Futuro**

NGDO-EC Liaison Committee  
WIDE Network Women in Development Europe

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# Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

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*Report on the WIDE-LC Seminar on Population and Development*

Brussels 21-22 February 1994

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*Section I*

**Seminar Report**

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# European NGDO Statement on Population and Development

## Introduction

As European NGDOs, we are committed to pursuing development policies that promote a more equitable distribution of resources and power between the North and the South and people-oriented sustainable development with particular concern for women's empowerment. It is therefore particularly important that we should participate in the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) to be held in Cairo in September 1994. Given the reality of economic recession within Europe and increasing uncertainty for Europeans in the international arena, the need to reassess the role of development cooperation and to strengthen North/South solidarity is paramount. The ICPD provides an opportunity to work towards more equal partnerships between Northern and Southern NGOs concerned to forge a people friendly and women friendly population and development agenda.

As representatives of civil society European NGDOs should play an active part in transforming existing population policies into policies which are based on a more people-centred and equitable approach to development. Whereas we need to ensure that women have greater access to contraceptive choice whatever their economic or social position, as NGDOs we feel that we have to stress the broad development framework within which these needs can be met. This means that we have to look at the specific issues informing development policy currently addressed under the umbrella of population and development. We have selected to speak specifically about women's empowerment, sustainable development and migration as key issues not only in the South but also here in Europe.

Empowerment of women is central to the population and development debate. Women's bodies are at the centre of population programmes, they are the main "target group" of population projects. We need to restore women as subjects of the debate. Reproductive health, women's rights and access to safe abortion, the need for men to take greater responsibilities to ensure safe sex are all issues on the agenda. Our contribution to the debate begins from our European situation as men and women coming from different class, cultural, age and ethnic groups. As Europeans we have our own history of seeking empowerment, reproductive health and rights for women. We are still fighting for adequate child care, shared family



responsibilities, better health and education and political and economic power for women. From our experience of our own struggle to gain reproductive rights and improve maternal and child health care we enter into the population debate with a knowledge which we can share with other women and NGO groups as we find ways to work together in our different parts of the world.

Sustainable development is an oft discussed but ill-defined concept in the international development debate. We need to break the simplistic equation, now current in the popular understanding of development, that population growth in the South equals global environmental destruction and mal-development. In Europe we have to take up our responsibilities for a better balance between economic growth and environmental conservation. European NGDOs with their sophisticated analysis of international sustainable development issues need to ensure that European economic development and environmental practice is equally under scrutiny. We need to shift the agenda from ways to reduce the "over-populated" and poor South to looking how to reduce the "over-consuming" and rich North. Ways to reduce consumption, change business practices, inequitable trade practices and improve income distribution within Europe are vital if we are to strengthen international moves towards sustainable development practices. As we enter into a world of growing uncertainty and inequitable distribution of resources, European NGDOs have the difficult task of educating the public in Europe about their role and responsibilities in putting into place sustainable development which would reestablish the balance between North and South environmental and economic policies.

The tougher measures being taken in most European countries to prevent migrants from entering "fortress Europe" is another the key issue for development education in Europe on the implications of unsustainable development policies. European NGDOs need to break the myth that overpopulation in the South is what drives people to migrate to the North. This too simplistic analysis misleads and hides the historical, economic and social interdependence of our world. In analysing the social, economic and political situation of the different migrant groups in Europe, we need to recall the historical conditions and international context in which they have been driven to move. And we need to promote migrant voices in the population and development debate.



## Development and Population

It is extremely important that the ICPD should not solely focus on population, and in so doing fail to pay adequate attention to the concept of development. Our view is that the issue of population, when considered in the framework of development, requires an integrated approach which brings into play the complex relationships between population growth, poverty, gender relations, environmental degradation, migration and production and consumption. Population issues are closely connected with power relationships at national and international level, inequitable resource distribution, race, class and ethnicity.

Development must be equated with quality of life, balanced political, economic and social development focused on people and the environment. Human rights, especially women's rights, are central. This means an end to gender injustice. We recognize the fundamental right of every human being to enjoy their reproductive rights.

Our concerns are directed at macro-policies, in particular the neo-liberal tendencies in which economic growth is the main objective and people become instruments to achieve this goal. The structural adjustment programmes through which countries have to make cuts in their social services, is on one side of this coin. These have resulted in drastic falls in the quality of general health care services, increased infant mortality as well as deaths in childbirth, drops in school attendance, especially for girls.

Though these problems have been given little attention in general, over consumption and over production in the Northern countries makes the heaviest demands on available resources and contributes considerably to global environmental degradation.

In addition to our concerns with macro-policies, we also stress the importance of analysing local specificities; a faulty or a incomplete diagnosis will lead to ineffective or even counter productive strategies. But in making distinctions between macro and micro level, we keep the same objective in view, the perspective of sustainable development.

Macro policies and analyses need to be based on micro policies. We realise that a distinction has to be made between the objectives and policies of governments and the needs, views and experiences of people.

History shows that the implementation of many population policies



have not improved the situation for the people involved. Because of the demographically driven and large-scale approach of state and interagency projects, many family planning programmes are not tailored to the needs of participants in the programmes. Large scale population projects involving social coercion or financial incentives are still being implemented. What these programmes do not address, and cannot in the framework in which they are being practiced is the fundamental inequalities of resources and power between and within countries, between racial and ethnic groups and between women and men. Education for women and primary health care, for example, in the context of family planning are discussed as the best way to encourage women to take up family planning methods rather than as development goals in and of themselves. In such programming, women are objectified and turned into the main "target" groups of family planning programmes rather than as subjects with social and cultural identities who need to be provided better options to choose how many children they wish to have.

## Empowerment of Women

### *Family planning and health*

As European NGOs we cannot accept the equation of population with fertility and reduction of birth rates in the South and therefore with controlling the reproductive capacities of women in the South. Even as we discuss how population policies have failed to empower women we also need to consider our situation in Europe. Are we as European NGOs part of the problem rather than the solution? Population is an issue of concern not only for family planning organizations, governments and women organizations but also for European NGOs.

Population policies and programmes which are demographically driven and carried out by hierarchical institutions within the male dominated medical and government establishment do not respect people's and especially women's rights. Indeed, women are very often seen as instruments to be used in reaching population reduction.

This kind of approach easily leads to abuse of the physical integrity of women. It does not take into account the living conditions of women, nor gender relations, nor the diversity of women based on age, educational level, race, class, ethnicity, nor the responsibilities of men. Women's interests become subordinated to the commercial interests of pharmaceutical industry and the interests of policy-makers. The demands and needs of the women themselves are too often ignored.





Women's fertility has been the primary target of both pro-natalist and anti-natalist population policies. Women's behaviour rather than men's has been the focus of attention. Women have been expected to carry most of the responsibility and risks of family planning, but have been largely excluded from decision-making in personal relationships as well as in public policy. Sexuality and gender-based power inequities have been largely ignored and sometimes even strengthened by population and family planning programmes.

The one-sided bias of population policy towards family planning programmes targeted mainly at married women means that other factors and groups, such as teenagers, are left out. The term family planning also no longer fits social realities which extend beyond the model of the nuclear family to include many forms of human lifestyle and co-habitation. We need a policy that recognises that women decide for themselves whether or not to bear children and how to regulate their fertility, which in turn is linked to the opportunities they have in their lives.

There is a need for affordable, culturally appropriate and comprehensive health care. Free and voluntary access to safe contraception and abortion has to be part of broader reproductive health services which also provide pre- and post-natal care, infertility services and the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV-AIDS. Reproductive services must include non directive counselling to enable women to make free, fully informed choices between different fertility regulation methods. All services need to be provided on a voluntary basis without incentives or disincentives.

There is also a need for health education for women of all ages and their families. Men have to be sensitised to the need to stop gender inequalities and violence against women and children. Men have to be educated to feel responsible and act accordingly in the field of reproduction and sexuality, and in their parental responsibilities. Women's interests can only be protected if they can actively participate in the formulation and implementation of reproductive health programmes.

### *Empowerment of women*

The improvement of the social, economic and environmental situation of the poorest, by creating the conditions where poor women and men are able to exercise control over resources and over policies concerning their lives and future is a priority. For decades women in the North and the South have been emphasising that the empowerment of women is a

condition *sine qua non* of development. Achieving genuine gender equity is a fundamental prerequisite both to achieving the universality of human rights and to the achievement of sustainable development.

Unfortunately, in the struggle for access to economic, social and political resources women still are the losers worldwide. Discrimination against women persists in all spheres of socio-economic life. The growing fundamentalism now evident in all parts of the world is a major concern as it reinforces traditional views of women as primarily wife, mother and family care-taker and men's patriarchal rights.

Women continue to have little control over resources of power; over natural resources such as land, water, forests; over human resources such as their sexuality, labour and skills and intellectual resources; overscientific knowledge, information and training; and over financial resources and access to credit. Women also continue to resist social pressure which reduces their confidence in their sense of self, that unique combination of intelligence, creativity and self-esteem. As a result of national and international policies the position of too many women is worsening instead of getting better.

Falling prices on international markets, increasing foreign indebtedness and militarisation have worsened the economic crises in most countries of the South. In order to qualify for aid from the IMF and the World Bank, countries are frequently led to accept structural adjustment programmes which too often has led to cuts in health care, education and social welfare programmes. The economic position of women already heavy, has been worsened by increasing responsibilities in family care. SAPs also have had a negative impact on women's own health and have limited opportunities for them to exercise their right to choose in matters of reproductivity.

Research indicates the relationship between an improvement in the position of women - their economic self-sufficiency, literacy rate, and education, overall health condition and options for reproductive choices - and a decline in birth rates. We want to stress that the empowerment of women is important in its own right, not merely as a means to address population issues. Although the empowerment of women is an easily used concept, it is a complex of interrelated processes of legal, economic, social, psychological and political variables. To increase their access to power, women have to be able to control the resources listed above. We want to stress the vital role of information, education and training for women to enable them to articulate their interests and carry out their projects themselves.



Empowerment of women also means that an ideological and social transformation has to take place which will bring about equity and equality in human relations, especially in the relationships between women and men.

Ultimately, this implies a redistribution of power on all levels.

If women live in a context where education, nutrition, security, self-esteem, self-determination and women's human rights, specifically reproductive rights, are guaranteed, then the control of their fertility will follow logically. Because empowerment means having choices and giving women the chance to make informed choices within an expanding framework of information, knowledge and analysis of the options available. These preconditions are indispensable for sound reproductive behaviour, but can not be seen in isolation from safe reproductive health care facilities.

### Sustainable development

Concern about the global environment and gloom-mongering forecasts about shortage of resources have reawakened fears about numbers of people in the South. Sweeping global generalisations about population growth and sustainable development must be avoided. We need to counteract the increasingly racist and sexist images in white European people's heads about people of colour flooding the North and threatening their wealth. Such arguments do not add to the debate and can often discourage people from addressing the issues at all. The fact that Northern countries are making the heaviest demands on available resources and contribute in large measure to global environmental degradation tends to be overlooked.

There is no single or simple general relationship between population and sustainable development. Often the main focus is on population density, in relation to the carrying capacity of the earth. We have to make clear what we mean by population: is it population growth, population pressure, or lifestyle with the high consumption level of most people in the North? Population pressure can mean areas of low population growth and decreasing fertility rates in combination with extreme environmental degradation as much as its opposite, an increasing population and an increasing demand on the available resources in the fields of social services, health care facilities, education, food.

Despite its currency and usefulness, the concept of sustainable development lacks precision, indeed it is based on a paradox. The idea of



sustainability runs the risk of subsuming contradictory interests, based on unequal power, within a supposedly value-free and scientifically neutral notion of environmental care.

Sustainable development is development in which the quality of life for everybody is central. It means that the basic needs of all men and women in the world are fulfilled. Elimination of poverty, the aspiration to social justice for everybody, all men and women in the world, and the creation of a greater government and business accountability are the most important elements in achieving this goal. We need to ensure that prices reflect real social and ecological cost such as women's unpaid labour, environmental damage and costs due to violence of all kinds.

Sustainable development will only be possible if countries successfully make the difficult transition to environmentally and socially efficient economies which are based on justice and equity and to democratic political and social structures which give people a voice and a stake in their own future. The debt crisis needs to be recognised and resolved by rich countries and international institutions taking responsible and humane approaches to world trade and financial agreements.

The conflicting perspectives of North and South in relation to environmental action are already clear, and have been time again expressed in international political discourse. Changing world conditions require a new concept of partnership between countries of the North and the South. It is no longer acceptable for the North to retain its tendency to dictate development objectives and agendas as shown by the failure of SAPs to improve economic or social conditions.

Similarly, the divergent positions and priorities of men and women with respect to the environment, arising from their gender relations, are still given insufficient attention in the field of politics and policy-making.

Women bear a disproportionate burden of responsibility for the subsistence and sustainability of their own livelihood, but the resources and means at their command are declining. Personal physical degradation and environmental degradation are interconnected. A sustainable approach to population and environment would have to find a way of balancing the conflicting demands of the provision of resources, environmental protection and reproductive rights. What can the concept of sustainability mean if we devote attention to stabilising eco-systems and encouraging their renewability but are still unable even to provide adequate care to reduce

maternal mortality, women's work load and illiteracy, violence against women and women's malnutrition? Unequal access to food and medical care endangers women's lives, and concern for gender and health must be carried forward into discussions on sustainability.

## International migration

Over the past few decades, millions of people have been leaving their homes and families with the aim of improving their living conditions. Migration into Europe from developing countries is determined by history. Different flows result from different colonial and other connections. In the fifties and sixties, Northern and Central (Western) Europe encouraged migration from Southern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East as a source of labour. Although the number of people throughout the world grew in the eighties, most of the Northern countries brought in tougher measures to prevent the entry of migrants. Even states which had traditionally been welcoming to migrants have gradually modified their policy towards non-Western foreigners. The predominant policy orientation in the field of migration is no longer the protection of rights, but the control of migrant movements. They are increasingly looked at from the angle of security and stability, and less from a human rights perspective.

In Europe the process has been accompanied by a rise in nationalistic feelings which have often found expression in racist movements even against those people coming from Turkey and Eastern European countries such as Albania and Ex-Yugoslavia. Media images of Southern people "flooding" into the North, set the context for racist tendencies. European authorities tend to ignore or discount history. Europe should only recall its terrible history of eugenic, racist policies and genocide to be on its guard against the emerging political right which finds support among people by playing on these fears.

While the international market is opened up for the free flow of goods and trade regulations are designed in favour of the North, anxiety about "being overwhelmed" by people is legitimised in population policies controlling the movement of the growing numbers of migrants from the South to the North. In Europe fears have been accelerated by the fall of the Berlin Wall and successive labour migration from Eastern Europe.

The concept in which a direct link is made between international migration and population growth is misleading and dangerous. It serves to divert from the real factors that influence people's decisions about migration. The reasons are



to do with rapidly deteriorating living conditions caused by economic hardship, war, conflict not because their countries were or are "over-populated".

To address demographic changes it is necessary to make an integrated analyse of the context and the real reasons for international migration. There appear to be several differences with regard to the character of migratory movements today, as opposed to decades or centuries ago. They are not as distinct in motivation or character as previously and the so-called voluntary motives are often confused with reasons normally attributed to forced migration; push factors, such as the socio-economic conditions people are living in, do seem nowadays to be generally more impelling than pull factors.

The root causes of migration are the economic circumstances such as inequitable distribution of resources and poverty and the current economic crisis in the South and in East Europe as a result of the implementation of structural adjustment programmes. The political causes are war, systematic human rights violations, women's rights violence and persecution for political ideas, religious beliefs or ethnic origin. In addition there people migrate due to the natural disasters and environmental causes such as pollution, radioactivity due to nuclear testing and desertification

In considering migration, more emphasis should be put on support to civil society and social alternatives in creating conditions which encourage people to stay where they are. This means the creation of social, economic, political, environmental and legal conditions in urban and rural areas which allow free choices.

As NGDOs we are also concerned about the strict migration controls which promote "illegal" migration. It seems that "Third World" and Eastern European labour is still imported when needed and cheap. Reduced status and illegality lead to exploitation at work: low status jobs with little protection. Such workers are very vulnerable and can easily be exploited.

Women especially are a vulnerable group as may be seen in "the trade" of women such as sex workers or mail order brides and in the area of domestic service, a growing area of employment non-white and migrant women, where all rules are ignored.

In the current migration process women are often at a disadvantage. Though migration regulations are likely to be gender-neutral, in their application women may find it difficult to obtain the same refugee status as men (eg when a wife's staying permit is connected to her husband's and therefore is threatened by forced repatriation in the case of divorce). Fears of persecution which is

specific to the position of women, such as rape, mutilation or gender based laws, are not currently recognised as justification for political asylum.

Policies which coerce people to move or stay should not be tolerated nor should family planning be promoted as a solution for problems caused by migratory processes. The North should stop using double standards when addressing the issue of democratisation in the South, we cannot turn a blind eye on regimes which force people to flee due to persecution when it suits us because of advantages trade agreements and then explain migration as due to "over-population".

The rights of migrants should be respected. Access to services for migrants should not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnic origin, disabilities, place of birth or marital status. Migrant women need special protection.

We reject policies which discriminate against migrant workers and their families by denying them access to services accorded to nationals and, in the case of long-term migrants, citizenship.

There is a need for change in attitude as well as laws and law enforcement on the issue of international migration. People who migrate from the South and from Eastern Europe should not be considered only in terms of what they contribute and have been contributing for decades to Western societies. If migrant communities in the North receive adequate empowerment, not only will they benefit the community, but they are a vital resource for their own communities of origin. Also the South's and East's contribution to cultural development in Europe is enormous. Therefore, international migration need not be seen in "problematic" terms only.

We reject policies designed to control the refugee movements which result in:

- a) the denial of the right to asylum to those with legitimate claims to refugee status and
- b) the return of refugees and or their families to dangerous or inhumane situations, either through involuntary repatriation, or removal to "safe" third countries.

## Conclusion

European NGOs seek to redefine the population and development agenda so that we increase peoples' options and space for self-determination in both North and South. We aim to bring to the international debate our own histories, understanding of people, politics and power in Europe. Our engagement with the ICPD is in order to change the debate from one narrowly focused on demographic goals through potentially coercive family planning policies to one which aims to put in place reproductive rights as part of gender equitable and just development policies.

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# Population and Development: an integrated approach

## Seminar Themes and Issues

*Following presentations from Wendy Harcourt representing WIDE and SID/WID and Achta Tone Gossingar from Chad who spoke of the demographic conditions and the status of women of Chad, the debate was opened to the floor in a series of plenary discussions. The plenary debated the draft version of the seminar document. Southern Resource people contributed to the debate with their views of the document's position on the three topics under discussion: empowerment of women, sustainable development, and migration.*

## The Seminar Framework

The opening debate looked at the seminar's place in the historic continuum of international United Nation's Conferences which are currently debating development issues. An important conclusion was the need for strategic action on population and development by European NGOs which would enable European NGOs to contribute fully in international development debates.

What emerged was that a debate on population and development could not focus only on demographic trends. The topics covered ranged from development education to fundamentalism with the continual focus being placed on how European NGOs can best contribute to the discussion.

Billie Miller, President of the NGO Forum 1994 explained the international NGO response to the International Conference for Population and Development (ICPD). She proposed that the ICPD be seen as part of the continuum beginning from the Bucharest and Mexico Population Conferences but also including UNCED, the Vienna Human Rights Conference, the small islands states in Barbados, with the culmination of these conferences being the World Women's Conference in Beijing in September 1995. For her the ICPD marked a major shift in the thinking of population agencies, NGOs and institutions. Whereas in earlier population conferences development was a shadowy concept there was now an established connection between population and development. For her "Cairo is the last opportunity to get it right."

She defined the "hot issues" under debate in the preparations for the last prep-com to be held in New York, April 1994 as the redefinition of the family, migration and abortion. She asked that European NGOs take a more prominent role in the discussion on migration and that they help others to counteract the Vatican's position on abortion.

Strategically she suggested that the most effective way to be involved in the official ICPD forum was for NGOs to be on Government delegations and to encourage interaction between governments and NGOs. In particular for "putting the 'd' into development" the NGOs North and South need to work together to exchange ideas.

Henny Helmich, representing the OECD Development Centre also advised on the European NGOs' role in the ICPD. He suggested that the ICPD Plan of Action should be viewed as a negotiating document. Therefore the language and the tactics with which NGOs chose to engage needed to be carefully thought through. For example, he felt that NGOs should avoid setting up neo-liberal thinking as the enemy, nor should they attack in a rhetorical fashion Structural Adjustment Policies. This produced only antagonism. It would be more useful and in the long run more effective to seek out instead official positions which shared with NGDOs concerns for justice and equity, women's rights and fairer trade agreements.

In proposing the important issues for European NGDOs he pointed out that recession and unemployment are critical concerns in Europe. Migrants from the South or former Soviet Bloc countries were seen by the general public to be taking jobs from Europeans and using scarce resources. The problem was how to convince European public opinion that the North needed to share resources and could welcome migrants rather than seeing them as threatening. Population policies by European governments to restrict movements of people into Europe were being formulated with this background. The response from NGDOs needed to be fully aware of the increasingly racist and depressed economic climate in which they were operating.

One response from UNFPA to the opening speeches and seminar draft document, was given by Louise Lassonde from the UNFPA in Geneva. Her comments challenged NGDOs to work in a climate of greater co-operation with UNFPA and population NGOs. She pointed out that there was not one approach to population programmes but many different approaches. She argued strongly for a recognition of the gains made by women-centred and poverty aware development policies, painfully put in



place during the last 30 years through UN agencies and government meetings. She mentioned Agenda 21 and the last draft of the ICPD Plan of Action as indicative of the gains made in terms of women's needs and poverty alleviation. She was concerned that European NGOs were unaware of the official debate and were not fully acquainted with the main documents or the analysis of regional concerns now being prepared during the ICPD process.

She argued that the document of the seminar was in danger of being negative rather than constructive because it lacked an operational approach and did not encourage collaboration between NGOs and Government Agencies. She gave an example of a constructive approach in the Human Rights document by the women who attended Vienna in June 1993. In this process women from NGOs and UN agencies came together to produce one document which meant that lobbying was more streamlined and more effective.

Her intervention drew several responses. Jacqueline Pitanguy contrasted the seminar's debate with her own experience in various forums in Brazil and internationally. She reminded the seminar that population is a complex issue. "We are, at the base of it, talking about people", she stated. And in the struggle to describe and to plan for social, economic and political changes to benefit people what was required was diverse expertise and skill in reaching the general public. In this task each group had partial visions and partial knowledge, and each view had limits as well as possibilities. She suggested that if alliances are to be formed each group needed to listen to the other views and to let go of the sense of being the only ones to have the "true vision".

### **Women's empowerment.**

The topic of women's empowerment and women's reproductive rights perhaps encouraged the most participatory and lively debate in the seminar. There was unanimous agreement over the need for women's control over their own body, sexuality and fertility including services for safe abortion and contraception. There was however, a question over whether family planning was strengthening women's rights as human rights or whether, in the guise of improving women's health and choices, population programmes imposed coercive measures by governments which were acting on international pressure to reduce numbers with little real benefit for the women involved.

The participants were in agreement on the need to give women more space in the debates and to ensure their right to negotiate the type of reproductive health services they needed. Demographically based statistics, for many participants, were not able to measure women's empowerment. Gender relations were much more complex and were determined by issues of class and culture. The debate focused on whether the population programmes which ignored the complexity of gender relations in the family and in the public domain were doing a disservice to women's rights.

Sita Aripurnami from Indonesia explained to the participants the continuing need to fight for women's rights in her own country. Her presentation on Indonesia which had a very strong and successful population programme, suggested that in practice population programmes could not always guarantee women's rights. She gave examples of unsafe contraceptives which were provided by international agencies with inadequate instruction for the women using them, often without adequate health care services. Family planning programmes did not encourage empowerment of women because despite good intentions they had little information or primary health and education facilities to enable women to make choices. She also pointed out that the emphasis on the nuclear family was not culturally appropriate and reinforced stereotypes of the good woman as the wife/mother with two children. For her, the demographic emphasis of reducing numbers restrained women and did not improve their human rights. She felt that in Indonesia family planning was government controlled and not sensitive to women's demands. Even if the literature and reporting of the wide international coverage of Indonesia's "success" might appear to have benefited women, in reality the language of the women's movement had only been adopted by documents and improving women's status and control over their own lives had never been the real goal.

Jacqueline Pitanguay, from another success story - Brazil - confirmed that governments did not have women's demands at heart. However, she argued that population policies are much broader than family planning. What was at stake was human rights. Women needed to have basic health and contraception as a human right. The problem, she argued, was that the control of resources and decisions were made by hierarchical bureaucracies which were male dominated, and at the local level women were having to negotiate with their husbands for permission to use contraception and to practice safe sex. In Brazil women were not equal partners in these decisions. For example 40 percent of AIDs cases were women in stable relationships. In conclusion she stated that in a male dominated world women were powerless even to ensure safe sexual relations.



Pat Mohammed from the Caribbean where there was a different tradition of gender relations underscored the importance of not treating women as only victims of population policies and sexual discrimination. Women were not all the same - working class women's strategies on how to deal with "their" men differed from middle class women. In the Caribbean they were often sole heads of households which required great strength in women. She concluded that male violence towards women was an important issue which needed to be discussed openly.

Sarah Hyde speaking from the perspective of Marie Stopes International, reminded the plenary of the positive aspects of family planning. Population programmes were not all unsuccessful in establishing women's rights if they were non-coercive and provided family planning information. She reminded the participants that the charter on human rights in 1968 stated that family planning was a human right. She asked that the meeting endorse women's movement campaigns to ensure greater access to safe abortion and that the health benefits of spacing be recognized. She also argued in favour of Norplant.

Adding to her comments, Donatella Giubilaro from the European Commission and Rigmor Allback from the World Population Foundation in Sweden pointed out that there was in actual fact a world wide unmet need for family planning. The role of NGOs should therefore be to ensure that family planning, linked to family spacing, primary health care and education, was available to poor women in the South.

## Sustainable Development

The debate on this topic focused on how to move from the equation "population growth led to environmental destruction which needed to be fixed by population planning" to understanding the more complex reasons behind peoples' relation to the environment and how this was linked to demographic change. Unlike the discussion on women's empowerment where two poles emerged, there seemed to be general agreement that the seminar document covered the issues of sustainable development well. What was missing however, was a clear statement on the European position and European responsibility for environmentally sustainable development.

Mira Shiva from India began the debate on sustainable development by reminding the participants of the shift in the agendas from the Bucharest Conference to the current preparations for Cairo. In Bucharest the argument put forward by Southern governments was that "development is



the best contraceptive." In 1994, the link between population and development was now questioned and reproductive choices were discussed with reference to the basic needs of poor women and the need for sustainable development. But, she argued, though governments talk about sustainable development, poor people continued to be the victims of government policies because they are blamed for environmental destruction and for being too many. She saw a very big danger in the link between population and environment and development which became popular after UNCED. There was now, according to Shiva a danger that aid tied to population control programmes could become the "solution" - justified by the argument that equated population growth with environmental destruction and mal-development. This argument encouraged a band-aid quick fix way of development planning which did not necessarily improve the quality of life of the poor.



Shiva continued by arguing that the logic of the "quick fix" could be found in many aspects of development policy. For example, in her own field of medicine and health care, she saw programmes where iron tablets were handed out instead of food. Iron tablets should be used as supplements not as equivalents to food. Such "aid" bordered on dangerous for peoples' health. She was deeply concerned that the popularity of population programmes was deflecting much needed money from primary health care. Despite promises to provide basic health needs as part of population programmes in reality most of the money went into providing contraception and in supporting coercive practices which in India Shiva argued, had infringed peoples' rights rather than improving their quality of life.

In addition the population policy was being carried out as if only western science and technology could benefit "ignorant" peoples of the South. She asked that participants had a more reflective response than this - Indian people too had their health and cultural customs for contraception. For Shiva this was not just a question of challenging western imperialism (however well meaning) but that there was a deeper question to be asked: what happens to people if we take their knowledge system away? In India there were many local contraceptive methods which were dismissed by western medics but could be far more effective than western contraceptives which were not always fully understood by the people using them. In her opinion, population planning should focus on improving health and education rather than providing in cultural isolation contraception. When family planning was provided it needed to be carried out in conjunction with local medical knowledge and customs.

Eugene Binama from Burundi now working in NOVIB in Burkina Faso raised the question of current trade agreements. The question he posed to the participants is how to assess the impact of GATT on the European recession and how this could link to the debt in the South. He suggested that the way Europe uses resources led to over-consumption of energy and natural resources which has a serious impact on the South which provides the raw material but saw little benefit from their natural wealth.

The discussion following Binama's statement brought out the need to clarify the specificity of Europe's policies for more environmentally sustainable industrial development, waste management and less energy consuming lifestyles. The question was also raised as to how this was linked to women's role as care takers of the family and local environment.

## Migration

Although almost all participants agreed that migration was a major topic for Europe, many felt that the discussion on migration was not given enough emphasis. As representatives from migrant groups shared their experience in Europe, participants were asked to recognise migration has an economic and cultural gain for Europe. European NGDOs were invited to work with migrant groups to secure their rights in Europe and to educate the public on the international climate in which South-South, East-West and South-North migration was occurring. The discussion brought out the need for more solidarity among NGDOs and migrant groups.

Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi began the debate by arguing that migration by professionals was understood as a normal mechanism of exchange of culture, resources and people. For example the Mediterranean has had a long tradition of migration. She asked participants to remember that migration was in some circumstances positive. It was only when it involved the poor that it became a "problem". In the case of mass migration of the poor the dangers were more in the origin of the country than where people migrated. She asked the seminar to consider that the conflicts, wars, economic difficulties which made people move were largely due to the global economic conditions caused by inequitable international trade, increasing debt in the South and disruption by western development of sustainable local cultures.

She drew attention to the conditions of women - both those left behind by men and those facing difficult conditions in a new country. Women



were often shouldering all family and community responsibilities in the absence of men. Women migrants carry cultural as well as economic responsibilities for the families' well-being. In Europe migrant women were forming strong networks which enabled them to cope with difficult situations of adjustment increasingly marred by discrimination and racial prejudice.

Taha Mellouk from the Union of European Migrants Forum referred favourably to opportunities provided by the ICPD Plan of Action. He posed some concrete recommendations for better conditions for migrants in Europe. He asked the migrant rights (only legislated in 1977) be reinforced so that as borders were being closed down and therefore current streams of migration slowed, the conditions for migrants already in Europe could be improved. He underlined the difference between legal statements and the realities for migrants, and argued that the "right to free settlement" should be respected. Whereas members of the European Union could settle where they like within Europe, migrants could not. Migrants needed to be able to vote at least in local elections and there needed to be greater protection from the mounting violence based on racism and distrust of migrants. European people needed to respect other cultures. At present there was no cultural exchange or welcoming of other ways of life. Rather there was exploitation of migrant labour and a social demand that migrants fitted into the European way of life. He was concerned that European migrants in search for better employment and livelihood were now entering Western Europe and increasing the tensions among migrant groups. He concluded that NGDOs had an important job to enhance public education on migrants' rights and to act in solidarity with migrant groups already established in Europe.

## Conclusions

The plenary discussion on the draft document indicated that European NGDOs needed to have a much clearer position on population and development from their own European context. Although many participants were vocal on implications of current development policies and questioned non-people centred population programmes in the South, what was not debated was European women's position on population. Some questions remained on how European women saw their reproductive services and their history of empowerment. As women in the South were questioning the impact of changing political and economic structure in their countries, European women also needed to reflect on the impact of the massive changes in Europe on their lives. Bringing to the international debate

European women's knowledge of their own history together with their analysis of international concerns would strengthen European women's ability to act in solidarity with other women's groups. In the sustainable development debate the question of how European people can take responsibility for environmental degradation was raised but the discussion lacked concrete ideas on how to reduce the consumption level of European populations, and how to change public opinion about expectations of a European life-styles. The debate on migrants covered both the situation of migrants in Europe and in their place of origin. It was, however, evident that European NGDOs were at the beginning of their discussion on how to work with migrant groups.

Nevertheless, most participants agreed that the plenary was a promising beginning to a European discussion on the complex issues of population and development. The seminar document was broadly accepted and the seminar debate laid the ground work for discussions among NGDOs. The recommendations from the seminar will help to ensure a stronger European voice on population and development in Europe, the New York Prep-Com and the Cairo meeting itself.



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## *Section II*      **Recommendations**

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## Overview: "Putting the D of development back into the ICPD"

*Following the plenary discussions three workshops debated the major themes of the seminar document in order to make recommendations for advocacy by European Development NGOs towards their public and more specifically towards the European Commission's preparations for the ICPD. The three workshop rapporteurs then met with the general rapporteur James Mackie who summarized the conclusions of the workshop at the summarized the Final Plenary.*

### Workshop Group Methodology

The three workshops worked in quite different ways. All three started with some general discussion, which, in one case, went on for most of the Workshop. The other two spent more time going systematically through the Draft Recommendations agreeing how they felt about them, though in both cases they seem to have been unable to run through them all.

### General Comments

Overall there appears to have been agreement with the general direction of the Draft Recommendations. There was equally widespread agreement that they needed a thorough editing and that the structure of the Recommendations should reflect the structure of the Seminar Discussion Document so that the individual recommendations could be clearly linked with the major issues identified in the Discussion Document. There was a general need for greater clarity and more coherence in the Recommendations and the language could be much improved on.

In particular it was felt the tone of the Recommendations was wrong, they needed to be worded in a less negative and less defensive way. The francophone group had considerable problems with the French translation of such words as "empowerment", "gender", "reproductive health and rights" and it was agreed that it would be important to check common practice. It was also agreed that a list of a half a dozen to ten key recommendations should be identified for institutional lobbying purposes, but that the rest, while requiring substantial editing, should not be jettisoned as many of them were important points to make particularly towards the NGO world itself.





## Discussions under the document themes

Empowerment of women was the most discussed topic in the workshops. One group concluded that the issue needed to be more integrated with analysis of the other two issues of migration and sustainable development. Gender relations, health and the rise of fundamentalism should also be added to the document's analysis.

Under the topic sustainable development the workshops concluded that the document needed to be more specific about what people can do in the North to combat over-consumption. NGOs had an important responsibility to educate the public in the North.

In the conclusions on migration, participants discussed how to de-link migration from alarmist and sensationalist "Population Bomb" analyses. Reassessing migration in the context of international development issues was another important public education theme for NGOs. Participants suggested that the reasons for migration and the ways it is linked to underdevelopment or "mal-development" should be more carefully analysed.

## Workshop conclusions

There were a number of major issues which need to be continued in the debate on "population and development". They could be summarized in the following questions on which the workshop debates centred:

- How could European NGOs work towards population and development policies which aim to meet first basic needs in order to enable people to make real choices in reproductive issues? (Putting the "D" back into the ICPD debate.)
- How could European NGOs contribute to policies to continue the campaign to increase primary health care for women, access to safe abortion and child spacing?
- How could European NGOs help to combat the worrying rise of fundamentalism in many parts of the world, among many religions?
- How could European NGOs help shift the population debate away from a narrow focus on numbers to an analysis of international development and gender issues?

## Preparations at the European Union Level for the ICPD Conference in Cairo, September 1994

### European Council

In November 1992 the Council and the representatives of Governments of Member States adopted a resolution on Family Planning in Population Policies in developing countries. To improve co-ordination between Member States and the Commission on these issues, an expert group was set up and has held a series of meetings. To date this resolution is the only official EU position.

The Commission is currently preparing a position paper in preparation for the ICPD. On May 6th 1994 the Council of Ministers of Development Cooperation will discuss and propose for adoption an official EU position for the ICPD in Cairo.

In preparation for this meeting the DG I of the Commission organised a Conference on Family Planning and Population on February 28th, 1994. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the Commission officials and other interested people about the population and development debate.

### European Parliament

The Committee on Development and Cooperation of the European Parliament appointed Mr Nordmann in January 1991 as rapporteur. Mr Nordmann has been commissioned to prepare a report on the changes in demography and development. On 26th January 1994 the Committee on Development and Cooperation of the European Parliament adopted a resolution which will be presented to a plenary session of the parliament in April 1994.

The seminar recommendations will be forwarded to official EU channels.



## Seminar Recommendations

A group of representatives of European NGDOs meeting in Brussels on 21-22 February 1994, under the auspices of NGDO-EC Liaison Committee and the Women and Development in Europe Network - WIDE, to prepare for the UN International Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo in September 1994, recommend to:

- their colleagues in all European NGOs, and;
- the Commission of the European Communities, the Council of the Union and the Members of the European Parliament;

the following Basic Principles and Priorities for Action to guide their preparations for the Cairo Conference and their policy formulation and work in the field of Population and Development.

### Basic Principles

We believe that the following four Principles are basic to all activities concerned with population and development:

I. Population concerns should be dealt with in a DEVELOPMENT context and never on their own divorced from the reality of people's daily lives.

As long as poverty exists the daily struggle for survival will be people's first concern and population or family planning considerations will always come second. Free choice remains a relative concept for people whose basic needs are not met. Thus improved quality of life, justice and food security, rather than overpopulation, are the areas that require most urgent attention. The aim is not to eliminate the poor but to eliminate poverty.

II. The right to choose freely in matters of reproduction is a basic human right that should be open and accessible to all women and men.

III. Equality between men and women is an essential prerequisite for the successful implementation of development and family planning programmes.



IV. Sustainability in terms of environmental, human and material resource considerations is a fundamental principle that should underpin the design and implementation of all development and family planning programmes.

### Priorities for Action

To put these *Basic Principles* into practice we identify the following points as the key priorities for action. (Within the limits of our capabilities) we undertake, and we urge others to undertake, wherever possible to:

**A. Combat analyses of population issues that sensationalise and misinform the public and seek to lay the blame with others. In this area we would, in particular, denounce analyses that:**

- promote "population bomb" theories;
- refuse to recognise the urgent need to reduce overconsumption in the North;
- suggest that migration to the North is primarily due to "overpopulation" in the South;
- suggest that restrictive migration policies will resolve the problem of unemployment in the North.

We are also deeply concerned by the recent trends in the rise of "fundamentalist" schools of religious and ethical thought that are often closely associated with such views.

We urge NGDOs and European Institutions to give priority to the fight against racism and xenophobia, and to support actively groups that defend the rights of refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers.

**B. Promote free and universal access to a full range of reproductive health services as a basic right for all people. This involves among other measures to:**

- improve access to education for all and particularly for women;
- ensure that information on a full range of family planning methods are accessible to all, with specific attention to young people;
- ensure that access to a full range of safe family planning methods is available for all;
- end coercive birth control;
- solve the problem of sterility;

- ensure SAPs (structural adjustment programmes) do not have negative effects on such services;
- increase budgets to fund high quality reproductive health care systems, in addition to development aid budgets.

**C. Encourage and promote the empowerment of women. This implies among other means to:**

- implement projects and programmes that support the empowerment of women,
- support educational programmes and projects to raise men's awareness of discrimination against women and of their own parental responsibilities;
- promote development and family programmes, based on an adequate gender analyses;
- combat violence against women and children in and outside the home
- promote gender equity within NGDOs and European Institutions.

**D. Work towards a sustainable development model in the North and in the South by undertaking, among other things to:**

- implement the Agenda 21, as agreed to at the 1992 Rio Summit by ensuring that its provisions are followed in both the North as well as in the South;
- promote action oriented research into practical means to change Northern lifestyles;
- support educational campaigns in the North which promote sustainable development patterns and sustainable lifestyles in the North.



Prepared by the WIDE-LC Secretariat as mandated by the Seminar Final Plenary

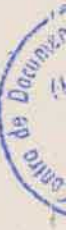


## *Section III*

## **Points of View**

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## Population: a complex issue

### Interviews with seminar participants

*Wendy Harcourt interviewed a selection of the participants at the seminar in order to bring out their different points of view.*

**"The focus needs to be on reproductive health":  
Donatella Giubilaro, DG 1 European Commission**

*As one of the main instigators of the seminar did you feel that the objectives were reached?*

In the sense that we needed to raise the issues of population and development among the European Community I think that we did achieve something as we have brought so many different NGOs together. The recommendations though, either for the EC or for European NGOs need more work.

*Participants saw one of the seminar's objective as moving the focus from population as only a problem of the South and Southern women's fertility to a discussion on global inequities, limits to growth, and over-consumption in the North. Do you think this was a valid concern for the seminar?*

As development NGOs concerned with strategic thinking within development cooperation, the discussion could have been more focused on implementing projects which are more open to women's reproductive rights, to health and to education and to men's roles and responsibilities in maintaining family size and livelihoods. Though maybe as much as 80 percent of population programmes do not work well there are at least 20 percent which do benefit the women and men involved. We should look more constructively at what works. Cairo should be seen as a positive forum where Northern NGOs and women's groups can work with policy makers to improve Southern peoples' quality of life. European NGOs should focus their energy on ensuring that health and social programmes now being put into place include education on reproductive health and women's rights.

We need to formulate clear recommendations which would put into place quality services for women. NGOs can help at the micro level to give women the opportunity to choose how many children they want. This is what will determine the well-being of families, now. Women, young teenagers in particular, need information on abortion and contraception and good health care.

The real challenge is to change the practice of family planning. And in our case this means to improve the standard of European Union assistance in the field of reproductive health and education. The Commission is open to working with NGOs towards this goal and I see this seminar as one step towards initiating the dialogue.

**"There is no North and South. We need to work in equal partnership": Jacqueline Pitanguay,  
President of CEPIA, Rio de Janeiro**

*As a well-known activist in the issue and having organized national and international seminars on reproductive rights how do you assess the WIDE-LC seminar?*

What I missed was the input of reproductive rights women's groups and European based NGOs. In Latin America we have strong national women's networks who are very visible and I missed that type of voice in the seminar. It appears from both this seminar and in the international meetings I have attended, that the European presence in the national and therefore international debate on population and development needs to be strengthened. I am left still unsure as to what women and NGOs think are the European issues in the population and development debate. The focus seemed to be more on what is happening in the South. Though solidarity is important and welcomed, each of us needs to know and act on our own issues. We should be looking to understand our own problems and then meet in partnership internationally. We need to share not teach. There is no longer a North/South, we are all interdependent in a global economy and community and we should enter into a dialogue on terms of equality in order to strengthen our resistance.

*It does seem that there was not much engagement at the heart of the seminar with European issues but that the participants spoke as if the issue of population was "out there." However, I think that there was some self-criticism that we need to be more conscious of our own issues and that we are perhaps witnessing a shift in development NGOs thinking. Did you have some thoughts on what are European issues?*

Let me say that I see migration as the key issue. It was discussed in these two days, but for me it could have been discussed by more participants than those representatives of the migrant groups. The general discussion on the cause of migration - is it due to mal-development or not - did not clarify what is specifically European. I would suggest that European NGOs need





to look more closely at the interaction between the different migrant groups and the form of apartheid which is being created. I also missed a discussion on the relationship of migrant women with European women.

Another issue which emerged in some workshops but was missing in the main debate was the rise of fundamentalism in all religions. This rearguard action which is global, reinforces traditional women's roles and reduces the political support for women's control over their own bodies. Women in Europe need to guard against this in their own countries and be in solidarity with other women.

*You mention that European NGOs need to be strengthened I must say in defense that there are active women's reproductive rights networks but that they do not always work closely with development NGOs.*

What I meant by the European position needing to be stronger is perhaps more to express my surprise that whereas in Latin America we have prepared and worked on statements and documents for the ICPD for years, there is no document yet prepared by the European Commission which means that there has been no lobbying by European NGOs. And, although I can see this seminar is an attempt to start the process, it seems very late. I was also very taken aback at the antagonism expressed in the meeting by some government representatives. The lack of listening to other points of view and the claim that only they had "expert" knowledge alarmed me. In Brazil we are working together with population institutions and NGOs aware and respectful of our differences. We have involved women from all areas of life - from grass roots, prostitutes, trade unions, civil society groups. Although there is not always a common agreement at least we are create the space to debate and to bring forward our stories. There is an energy in Brazil which comes from the willingness to respect all forms of knowledge. In the South, no doubt because of our colonial history, we are very aware of the dangers of having people who are the "knowers" and the people whose behaviour are observed and "known".

*How would you suggest that European NGOs work with the population institutions?*

It is of course a difficult process to work with the different actors in the debate all of whom have different interests. In Brazil we have been working for a long time with our different perspectives but perhaps we are more willing to debate because we all feel that the situation is ours and the responsibility to change it is also ours. In the different conferences I have

worked on we have been very careful to stage the events so that everyone's intervention and importance is recognised. We do have, of course, even among the women's groups differences, but we are always looking for a strategic way to work together. Brazil has been classified as one of the five problem countries along with Mexico, Indonesia, China and India. Our resistance to the programmes which have been seen as a success in reducing population numbers is very immediate. This gives us the sense of urgency to act and to use the ICPD process to expand the debate and to put pressure on the Brazilian Government to give space to women's reproductive health issues.

*What are some of the activities you have been involved in in Brazil?*

I have been working more or less full time on the issue since December 1992. Perhaps the most important activity in terms of forming a Brazilian platform was a meeting of 400 women in Brasilia. Women came by bus and plane from all over Brazil. We had very little money but we managed to make a great success. The opening platform was made up of representatives from almost all Brazilian NGOs and women's national networks as well as two trade unions. The result has been a very broad engagement of diverse groups in the debate and the basis for Brazil's non-governmental contribution to the ICPD. It is also part of the process which has made Brazil so visible internationally. It helped to form a basis of trust among the different groups which was not necessarily there in the beginning.

*Internationally there is a strong women's lobby and as you say Brazilian women are very vocal in that platform. Do you see European NGDOs and women's groups as potentially influential in setting the international population and development agenda?*

I hope that this seminar has seen a relaunching of alliances among NGOs in Europe which will enable European groups to join the international platform. Europeans need to take a strong position in the international political arena. From our side, we have things to share politically. Globally, we have to guard against the new waves of fundamentalism and violence against women, to challenge the decreasing support for abortion and to frame this debate in terms of seeking alternative models to the current development path. I look forward to Europeans joining a dialogue among equals.





**Polish women are in danger of losing their reproductive rights": Anna Sierzowska-Ketner, Warsaw**

*Have you seen changes in women's reproductive rights with the fall of the old order in former East Europe?*

In Poland we have the paradoxical situation where the rights women won in the old repressive regime - abortion, sex education, creches - have now been undermined in the new order. Instead of sex education we have religion, instead of abortion we have a new anti-abortion law with a *concordat* being agreed to by the State and the Vatican. The groups which challenged the regime - the liberal - now that they are in power do not take on board women's issues. Ironically, Polish women had more equality under the old regime.

*How do you compare the issues of women in Poland with the rest of Europe?*

I do not think we experience the same problems as women in other parts of Europe. Perhaps our situation is closer to India or other Southern countries. We are not developed industrially and therefore issues of over-consumption are not ours. Nor are we used to democracy so our advocacy role is less clear. In the change over of power, we now find that the church is close to the state with all that implies in terms of defining women's role as primarily mother and wife. We are fighting for basic rights but with poor infrastructure and little history of how to organise publicly. I hope that we can network more with other European women's groups in the future.

**"We need to fight any tied aid to population programmes":  
Brita Schioldan Nielsen, Eurostep**

*What do you see the aim of advocacy work for population and development as an NGDO situated in Brussels close to the European Commission?*

Our major advocacy work in Eurostep is aimed at improving the situation in Africa. One of our major fears is that the European Union will react to the current debate which presupposes a close link between population growth and the failure of development by instituting clauses which would tie aid to family planning targets. In Eurostep we see the importance of dialoguing with the Commission in order to bring out the complexity of the debate. I think NGDOs need to be more strategic and work with governments and the European Union where possible. The world is in crisis - we need to see each other as partners in trying to undo some of the harm our current international development agreements are producing.



**"Racism is mainly directed to black migrants":  
Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, Akina mama Wa Afrika**

*Do you see mal-development as the cause of the increase of migration to Europe?*

Let us first be clear that mal-development does not refer to Southern countries themselves not being capable to support their population but rather to the international conditions - the global restructuring and inequitable world order which has forced mass migration. The international trade imbalance and debt for my country, Nigeria, for example has led many people to migrate within the country and within the Continent as well as to the North. We have to be careful in our analysis as to why people migrate - it can be for many reasons, just as it was for Europeans in the early years of this century.

*How do you see the increase in European racism in the last years?*

Racism towards migrants is linked first and foremost to colour. Black Commonwealth people are the ones whose right to migrate is questioned not white people from South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. I am a second generation British citizen, though some of my family still lives in Nigeria, but when I last entered the UK at Heathrow airport I was stopped and asked from where did I get that passport. It did not occur to the passport controller that I am a black British citizen. NGOs must do a lot more development education work to make the public aware of the reasons behind global migration.

**"We need to learn from other European NGO platforms":  
Ulrike Lunacek, Austrian Information  
Service on Development Policies**

*What is Austria's position as a non-EU member on the population and development debate in Europe?*

Austria is trying hard to be accepted into the EU (it will now join in 1995) so I think the government is broadly adopting the same agenda as other governments. There are two NGOs on the drafting team of the Austrian position paper for the ICPD, but only one NGO which looks seriously at women's issues. Austrian NGOs have also drafted a paper which broadly shares the same concerns as the WIDE-LC paper looking at women's issues, sustainable development and North-South inequity. I was very interested to come to the seminar to hear how similar our concerns are amongst NGOs and agree that we need to be clearly focusing on global economic development issues and poverty.



## The Politics of Language

*During the seminar, which was translated simultaneously into French and English, there were many terms which needed clarification. The following glossary defines the most common terms under discussion.*

### Development

The term has shifted meaning during the last forty years since international development cooperation was established. The "development" of a country is traditionally measured by GNP or the level of economic growth in the formal sector. Industrialized countries, defined as developed economies, under development cooperation programmes have provided training and capital to "develop" agriculturally based economies. Since the 1980s with the world economic crisis the goal and model of economic development has been questioned. It has become evident that international development assistance has not closed the gap between "developed" and "undeveloped" countries the latter becoming increasing impoverished and indebted to the former. The term development has now acquired several prefixes, among them being - "mal development" which underlines the failures of traditional development models, "sustainable development" which indicates the need to balance environmental resource use with economic growth and "human development" which focuses on quality of life rather than economic growth as the goal of development.

### Empowerment

This is a term which has emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s as a continuation of the women in development strategy. Moving on from the strategy to "mainstream" women's issues, the "empowerment" strategy aims to reinforce and strengthen women's self-sufficiency. Instead of asking policy makers to include or recognize women's role in development projects, empowerment of women aims to provide access and opportunities for women's groups and networks to increase their political power. The ultimate goal is to enable women to make their own decisions about what economic and social roles they chose to play. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) a network of southern researchers and activists have popularized this concept in the international development debate.

## Gender

In the English language gender has become a commonly understood term referring to the socialized roles of men and women which are based on but not bound by their biological sexual differences. For example women's gender role in looking after the family - managing the household, caring for children - is socially and culturally determined whereas the biological ability to give birth to a child is not. What is considered a woman's gender role or a man's gender role varies in different cultures and economies. I.e. marketing in the Middle East is a man's job, whereas in West Africa it is the domain of women. Women work as typists in Europe whereas in India men perform that task. The term gender and development is now used to underscore the need for analysis of both men and women's economic, social and community roles. The difficulty of translating this concept into other languages means that the English term "gender" is often retained.

## NGDOs Non-governmental development organisations


The common term NGO (Non Governmental Organisation) is often supplemented with a D for development to distinguish NGOs which work on development issues in the South and carry out development work and education in the North from NGOs whose focus and target are purely in the North (eg work with the homeless in Europe, care for the elderly, civil rights etc).

## North and South

In international development cooperation several terms have been adopted to define the different levels of economic growth among countries: developed, less developed, least development; first world, second world, third world. Many countries relegated to the status of least development or third world have rejected these categories arguing that the implied hierarchy does not respect the cultural, historical and social strengths of countries which are not as economically strong as the industrialized economies. The more neutral geographic terms of North and South which roughly corresponds to industrialized and non-industrialization countries have been adopted.



## Population



Like development this is a highly contested term which has historical roots in the 19th century when people became statistical "populations" which needed to be managed and measured by governments. The demographic measuring of peoples, like the measurement of a countries' wealth by GNP, can introduce hierarchies which obscure the actual quality of life of the people in the country and the different concerns of individuals and groups of people. The term population officially covers a wide range of concerns: the politics of redistribution of resources between Northern and Southern countries, comparison of demographic trends among peoples (i.e. measuring aging trends, birth rates, mortality rates etc.), government and international family planning programmes aimed to encourage women to accept contraception, environmental management in the face of changing demographic trends and ways to reduce mass migration to name a few. The success of population programmes is indicated by numbers. i.e. of the number of acceptors of contraception or the reduction of births. This focus on numbers though easier to manage does not always allow for peoples' real needs to emerge and lead to terms such as the population explosion which scares rather than helps to explain. In contrast in entering the population debate the concerns of NGOs and women's groups are more centred on people - women's reproductive health, provision for education, access to resources, support for sustainable livelihoods, economic, legal and political freedom to chose where you live, the reversal of inequitable international economic policies. Given these different positions, the term needs to be defined in its specific context to avoid confusion. The proposal by groups outside the population agencies is that we should talk about social policy to empower women, or how to improve primary health care, or to provide public education on contraceptive methods rather than the "population programmes" aimed at reducing numbers.



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## *Section IV*      Resource Material

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## Note on Resources

The following documents are statements from European NGOs and international women's networks prepared for the International Conference on Population and Development. As part of the goal to share information and exchange different points of view the statements are published here as a series of resources to engage European NGOs further in the debate. All of the documents were available at the WIDE-LC Seminar.

The following two statements by DOCHAS an Irish NGDO network drafted by Pauline Eccles and the NGO Women's Forum of Germany outline these two European networks concerns with women, population and development issues.

The final resource is the concluding statement from "The International Women's Health Conference for Cairo '94" held in early 1994 organized by Jacqueline Pitanguay guest at the WIDE-LC Seminar. This meeting brought together women's groups from all over the world to strategize together and presents an alternative view to the mainstream approach to population and development.

# Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

## Dochas Position on Population and Development

1. In the light of the preparations for the 1994 UN Conference on Population and Development, the Irish NGDOs acknowledge that the continuing rapid growth in the world's population has serious implications for Third World development. It poses a major challenge to the world community generally and to development agencies in particular.

2. The experience of many NGDOs leads us to believe that high birthrates are integrally linked to poverty. The most important component of a population policy, therefore, is the sort of basic development programmes which enable poor people at the grassroots to see that they have some control over their lives, and provide a level of security or safety-net which is otherwise provided, at times of crisis and in old age, by children. Wherever such sustained development has taken place, all the evidence tends to suggest that people choose for themselves to have fewer children.

3. In particular, the empowerment of women through the provision of education for girls and skills training and income-generating projects for young women is a priority which leads directly to later marriages, better informed and more free decisions about having children and an improved socio-economic context within which to make decisions. If women have more control over their own fertility, this has a positive effect on their possibilities for personal development. This requires a better access to education and better paid jobs, fertility rates will tend to decline.

A high priority should therefore be given to funding primary health-care programmes, including women's education.

4. There must be an integrated approach to community development, rather than strategies that concentrate on only one issue - apparently as if the root cause of all development and environmental evils were over-population. We believe that such strategies are fundamentally misguided. But we also believe they are harmful, diverting people from the structural changes needed to counter the growing impoverishment of much of the Third World and the ecological destruction that has come with it.

5. Women and men have a basic human right to marry, conceive and form a family where the decision as to the number of children should be a free, informed and responsible judgement of both parents. Coercion from the state or any other body, or indeed any measures which subvert the free choice of the couple is unacceptable. Appropriate family planning education



to undergird the fundamental principle of responsible parenthood and enable properly informed decisions to be made both about the spacing of children and about the number that can be economically supported is to be warmly endorsed.

6. The Irish NGDOs are opposed to the imposition of population control programmes on Southern countries as part of aid disbursement conditionality from the North. In particular we campaign against population control projects which, far from extending the space of freedom, bring undue pressure to bear on women and 'de facto' violate their basic rights, as well as those projects which exploit women in pharmaceutical experiments. We share the view of southern women's organisations that it is necessary to delink population policy and family planning and situate birth planning within the broader framework of an integral approach of reproductive rights; embracing information, education, women's health care and the provision of safe and reliable methods of birth regulation in accordance with the wishes and moral convictions of women and men.

7. The fact that every year 40-60 million abortions are carried out worldwide (approximately half of them performed outside authorised health services) dramatically highlights the need for better birth-planning services. Illegal abortion is a major cause of maternal mortality in many countries and birth planning could contribute considerably to its reduction.

5th November 1993



## Statement on Population and Development NGO Women's Forum, Germany

Family planning is a human right of every person to decide about their own sexuality, life style and number of children. The right of free choice, however, is being withheld from women in various ways. The purpose family planning programmes is therefore to enable women to make use of their rights according to their needs. Their rights cannot be treated as inferior to demographic aims of population policies or reduced to only contraceptive.

There are various reasons that women have many, few or no children. In the South, alongside a desire to have children, poverty, the breaking-up of traditional networks of social security and patriarchal restrictions often play a decisive role. Offering women contraceptives alone does not provide a solution to their manifold problems.

Women in the North are also a long way from achieving self-determination over their bodies and procreation. This can be seen in the Federal Republic of Germany's restrictive legislation on abortion, paragraph 218, the over-emphasis on medication and technology during pregnancy and all other phases of the female life cycle. Despite state propaganda proclaiming its high regard for families and children, pregnancy means for many women abandoning career-oriented goals and financial independence. At the same time women are under increasing pressure from society to abort when prenatal tests reveal an abnormal fetus. Measures aimed at raising the birth rates in the North are intended to ensure the dominance of the white population and thus serve racist goals. Women bear the brunt of the risks, costs and disadvantages connected with raising children in a society which has ever increasing expectations concerning the "quality" of the children women are expected to produce.

The prevailing opinion presented by the media is that population growth - and, by the same token, the fertility of Southern women - are the main causes of the destruction of the environment, poverty and international migration, instead of analysing the complex and regionally varying causes of these problems. This single track argument leads the opinion makers to see only radical population-policy measures as the way to solve these problems. Defining the peoples of the South as being dangerous and potentially destructive - phrases such as "human time bomb" and "population explosion" are typical examples of what is fundamentally racist attitudes.



The North's consumption of resources and pollution are the main causes of the world's environmental problems. The North shares responsibility for the shrinking of the rain forests in the South and the environmental destruction caused by growing cash crops for export. But it is women, who plant crops for domestic consumption and who have to fetch water and firewood, that suffer the most from environmental destruction.

Falling prices on international markets, increasing foreign indebtedness and militarisation have worsened the economic crisis in most countries of the South. In order to qualify for aid from the IMF and the World Bank, these countries have accepted structural-adjustment programmes and therefore made cuts in their health-care, education and social welfare programmes. As a result, there has been a drastic drop in the quality of general health-care services; infant mortality, as well as death in childbirth, have both risen. At the same time, the countries of the North are granting more money to population programmes. This has not led to any improvement in the living conditions of the people of the South.

The connection made between migration and population growth are in turn linked to the North's increasing rejection of refugees from the South. The reasons for flight - such as loss of land, environmental destruction, neglect of traditional farming, lack of income generating opportunities in the cities, being driven away from home, persecution, war and other conflicts - are being lost from sight, in the same way as is happening to much larger South-South migration; the underlying reasons for refugee movements, the unequal distribution of resources and prosperity, are not questioned.

Using birth-control programmes to achieve demographic targets by drastically lowering birth rates has resulted in the development of contraceptives for women that are effective for a long period, which do not depend on whether the woman has any motivation to have fewer children and over which she has no control - implants and injections, for example. This leads to the distribution of contraceptives which harm women's health and to coercive participation of the poor and those regarded as "ethnically undesirable" in birth-control programmes. Instead, women and men should have access to information on sexuality and their bodies, as well as on contraceptive methods which meet their needs and conditions. This can only be done by programme approaches which are decentralized, grass-root-oriented and voluntary.



We are for family planning on the basis of free choice, but we are against the intention to include demographic targets in the final document of the UN-Conference on Population and Development. We protest against making development aid conditional on population policy. We also object to population control programmes being part of development co-operation. For example, the government of the Federal Republic of Germany has approved DM105 million worth of bilateral aid to Bangladesh - of which DM 50 million is to be spent on population-control programmes.

What we need instead are programmes which empower women and which improve their lives and their standards of health and education. These are goals in themselves and should not be made to serve the purposes of demographic targets.

NGO-Women's Forum Jan. 12, 1994

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

## The Rio Statement of "Reproductive Health and Justice: International Women's Health Conference For Cairo 1994"

During the period January 24-28, 1994, 227 women from 79 countries participated in "Reproductive Health and Justice: International Women's Health Conference for Cairo '94" held in Rio de Janeiro. The conference brought together representatives of women's and other non-governmental organizations and networks active in the fields of health, human rights, development, environment, and population. The main objective of the conference was for women to prepare to participate in the International Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo in September 1994, and to provide a forum where women could search for and identify commonalities on reproductive health and justice, while recognizing the diversities emanating from different economic, social, political, and cultural backgrounds. The conference also aimed at developing tools and strategies to be used before, during and after the Cairo conference.

The participants strongly voiced their opposition to population policies intended to control the fertility of women and that do not address their basic right to secure livelihood, freedom from poverty and oppression, or do not respect their rights to free informed choice or to adequate health care; that whether such policies are pro- or anti-natalist, they are often coercive, treat women as objects not subjects, and that in the context of such policies, low fertility does not result in alleviation of poverty. In fact, a significant number of the participants opposed population policies as being inherently coercive. There was unanimous opposition to designing fertility control measures or population policies specifically targeted at Southern countries, indigenous peoples or marginalized groups within both Southern and Northern countries, whether by race, class, ethnicity, religion, or other basis.

There was also significant criticism of pressure by donors and efforts to link development aid or structural adjustment programs to the institution and/or implementation of population control policies and a suggestion that donor countries should not promote in other countries what they do not support for the majority of their own people.

It was agreed that:

1. Inequitable development models and strategies constitute the underlying basis of growing poverty and marginalization of women, environmental degradation, growing numbers of migrants and refugees, and the rise of fundamentalism everywhere. For women, these problems (and their presumed solutions through economic programmes for structural adjustment which promote export production at the expense of local needs) have particularly severe consequences, growing work-burdens and responsibilities (whether in female-headed households or otherwise); spiralling prices and worsened access to food, education, health services and other basic rights; greater economic pressures to earn incomes; growing victimization through violence, wars, and fundamentalist attempts to control and subordinate women sexually and in a number of other ways.
2. External debt, structural adjustment programmes, and international terms of trade sustain Northern domination, increase inequalities between rich and poor in all countries, aggravate civil strife, encourage the corruption of government leaders, and erode the already meager resources for basic services.
3. Environmental degradation was seen to be closely related to inequality in resources and consumption, profit-driven production systems, and the role of the military as a major polluter and user of resources; hence, there is a close relationship between the violence and poverty that bedevil people's, particularly women's, lives and environmental problems. Focussing on women's fertility as a major cause of the current environmental crisis diverts attention from root causes including exploitative economic systems, unsustainable elite consumption patterns and militarism. Women in the conference urged governments to diminish military expenditures in favor of social programmes. The participants also urged the Northern governments and donors to stop supporting and financing military and undemocratic regimes in the South.
4. There was particular concern about the situation of women migrants who are heads of households, domestic servants, migrant workers, entertainers and other service workers. It was agreed that while the movement of people should not be constrained by discriminatory and restrictive immigration policies which operate in contexts where migration is often forced by economic hardship, civil strife, war and political persecution, efforts should be made to address the brutality and violence faced by women and children who are victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation.





5. Alternative development strategies must be identified. In doing so, there is no single blueprint for development strategies but a multiplicity of approaches within a basic framework of food security, adequate employment and incomes, and good quality basic services which can be guaranteed through democratic people-centered and participatory processes.

6. The "sustainable and human development models" that are currently being proposed in the official documents of governments and international organizations, need to be based on investments and social policies that guarantee the quality of life and well-being of all people.

7. There was general agreement on the need to design social development policies starting from the concerns and priorities of women. These include:

- the need to redistribute resources in an equitable and just manner without discrimination against women, to remove poverty, and to improve the quality of life of all;
- the need to design development strategies so that they do not disempower and marginalize people, particularly women;
- to restore and strengthen basic services (for health, education, housing, etc.) that have been eroded by macroeconomic policies;
- to provide health services that are of good quality, accessible, comprehensive, and address the reproductive health needs of women and men of all ages;
- to address reproductive health and rights needs and concerns (including the right to free and informed choice) within the context of social and economic justice;
- to strengthen women's participation and empowerment in political and policy-making processes and institutions with the goal of achieving gender balance in all such processes and institutions;
- to build accountability processes and mechanisms into policies.

8. The discussion of fundamentalism brought strong agreement that, whatever its origins or religious claims, its aim is political. Central to fundamentalist attempts to gain political power is the control of women's lives and in particular of female sexuality, including the right to self-

determination and reproductive decisions. There was criticism of the role of major Northern countries in supporting fundamentalist groups for their own political ends. Fundamentalists use religion, culture, and ethnicity in their pursuit of power; such movements represent a new form of war against women and an aggressive attempt to mutilate their human rights.

9. A major site of the fundamentalist war against women is over the meaning of "families". The participants at the conference agreed that a definition of family which is limited to a model with a male "head" of household, wife and children, does not reflect the life situation of all of the world's people. Instead it was agreed that all those who voluntarily come together and define themselves as a family, accepting a commitment to each other's well being, should be respected, supported, and affirmed as such.

10. All members of the family have rights, especially to justice and human dignity. Physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse towards women, young girls and children within families constitute a serious violation of basic human rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Women's rights within the family include access to resources, participation in decision making, bodily integrity and security. Women have a right to participate in public life, to social benefits and social insurance, and to have their unpaid work inside and outside the home recognized and shared by all members of the family.

11. Comprehensive and high quality health services for women, including for reproductive health, are a primary responsibility of governments. They should be available, accessible and affordable to women in order to reduce maternal mortality, morbidity, child mortality and unsafe abortion, within a broad women's health approach that addresses women's needs across the life cycle. Qualitative (as well as quantitative) indicators need to be developed to assess services, and users need to be involved in this.

12. There was clear agreement that quality reproductive health services are a key right for women. However, existing family planning programs cannot simply be redefined as programs of reproductive health. Reproductive health services should include prenatal, childbirth and postpartum care including nutritional and lactation programs; safe contraception safe non-compulsory abortion; prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of Sexually transmitted diseases, and breast, cervical and other women's cancers as well as the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, and treatment of infertility; all with the informed consent of women. These services should be women-





centered and women-controlled and every effort should be made to prevent the maltreatment and abuse of women users by the medical staff. The UN and other donors and governments should recognize the right to safe and legal abortion as an intrinsic part of women's rights, and governments should change legislation and implement policies to reflect such a recognition.

13. In the area of contraceptive technology, resources should be redirected from provider-controlled and potentially high risk methods, like the vaccine, to barrier methods. A significant proportion of the participants also felt strongly that Norplant or other long-term hormonal contraceptives should be explicitly mentioned as high-risk methods from which resources should be redirected. Female controlled methods that provide both contraception and protection from sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, as well as male methods, should receive the highest priority in contraceptive research and development. Women's organizations are entitled to independently monitor contraceptive trials and ensure women's free informed consent to enter the trial. Trial results must be available for women's organizations the different stages of such trials, including the very early stages.

14. Better health services are one element of women's human rights. In addition, sexuality and gender power relationships must be addressed as a central aspect of reproductive rights. Reproductive rights are inalienable human rights which are inseparable from other basic rights such as the right to food, shelter, health, security, livelihood, education and political empowerment. Therefore, the design and implementation of Policies affecting reproductive rights and health should conform to international human rights standards.

15. Women are entitled to bodily integrity. Within this principle, violence against women; forced early marriage; and harmful practices, especially female genital mutilation, must be recognized as a major reproductive rights, health and development issue. Governments should take measures to combat such practices and should be held accountable for failure to do so.

Reproductive Health and Justice: International Women's Health  
Conference for Cairo '94  
January 24-28, 1994 Rio de Janeiro





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Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

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# Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

# NGDO-EC-LC

Liaison Committee of Development NGOs to the European Committee

## *Main objectives*

- To represent the views of European NGOs to the European Commission, Parliament and Council of Ministers.
- To promote the flow of information to European NGOs on EC development policies, work and resources.
- To facilitate and improve the access of European NGOs to EC resources for development and emergency work.
- To encourage cooperation, dialogue and the exchange of ideas and experiences amongst European NGOs and NGO networks.
- To contribute actively to the formulation of European Community development cooperation, humanitarian assistance and other policies that have a bearing and influence on the Community's relation to the Third World.



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## Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

# WIDE

Network Women in Development Europe

## *Aims*

- To influence European and international policies on gender related development issues.
- To raise awareness on gender and development issues among important sectors of opinion in Europe.
- To promote dialogue and action among European women, southern women and southern women living in Europe in order to empower women worldwide.
- To exchange information and experiences concerning national policies on gender issues, gender training and evaluation.

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