

13 June 1990

## UNU Women

### Problematic

1. The UN decade on women has had a very important repercussion both at the national and the international level. At the national level mechanisms were created which helped to reformulate the laws and to respond to the new aspirations of women. At the international level, many intergovernmental as well as most non-governmental organizations took the women's programme of actions as the basic framework for their undertakings. All these efforts have lead to a growing presence of women in all fields of activities, to a greater participation in development and, finally, to the implementation of a quantitative equality between men and women.

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2. One of the key points that has been put into limelight in the last two years concern the presence of women in the political field. The Council of Europe, the Interparliamentary Union, Unesco, the Branch on Advancement of Women, to mention only a few, have dealt extensively with the access of women to position of decisions making. At that stage the question has been raised about the specific contribution women have made at the level of policy making. A strong conviction seems to appear indicating that there is a need for a thorough analysis



of the real contribution of women in every field.

3. In the UN system several organizations have carried on somewhat overlapping studies without apparently breaking new grounds. The repetition of the same kind of problematics in different instances of UN is not only a sign of a well known problem within th UN system but also of a shortage of new ideas concerning what has been called 'the issue of women'.
4. It does seem adequate that the UNU takes stock of an extensive state of the art in the UN family so that the whole problematic may be able to enter a new stage, namely the one of a new conceptual articulation of the women's situation in society, both as subjects of their own history and as untapped human resources for facing the new features of society in the coming decade.

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5. The Second Medium-Term Perspective of the UNU is focused on the general theme 'Global changes and global responsibilities'. The first sentence of paragraph 4 stresses the scope of this title, namely by saying:  
"A greater understanding of global changes and the human capacity to respond should enable the University to discern some of the critical issues that many UN agencies and other governmental and inter-governmental organizations will need to deal with in the coming decade."

Expressions like 'global changes' and 'human capacity to respond' show that the question at stake is not only problems and issues but also the definition of social forces which may become the actors of a global change as well as the initiators of new solutions.

On the basis of many facts and of a very abundant literature I contend that women's culture is one (if not the one) social force to embody such capacity.

6. During the last fifteen years women have become more and more involved into different realms of society and have entered several domains which were traditionally masculine. Though in certain regions of the world, the equality of the rights and equality of access are not refused, the trend is there. In most cases it is already incorporated in the official policies. However, such progress is not devoided of some contradictory features.

## Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

The way in which equality has been understood, namely as an unilateral integration of women into the world of men is re-creating a new inequality. In order to be successful and accepted, women adapt the ruling value system and repress in themselves whatever is specific in their way of being. Thus, their invisibility and their silence as women in different spheres of knowledge.

7. It has been very well documented that throughout the centuries women have created a culture, which has contributed to the balance and well-being of society. If such a culture which belongs to the unspoken world is not fostered and taken into account, this will represent a tremendous waste of memory and experience as well as of an unexploited potential for innovation and renewal of social life.
  
8. I am convinced that the decisions taken and the vision followed about women's culture will be a decisive factor for the historic decade we are living as it will present a new paradigm decisive for the next millenium. Obviously, this implies that, at the outset, we take the option that social actors are as important as the formulation of problems because they are, after all, the center and the goal of all processes of development.

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### Goals to be reached

1. To identify and systematize, in order to make then visible, the values and the modes of behaviour which represent women's culture.
  
2. To attempt the definition of a conceptual framework of equality between the two sexes based on the assumption that



women's identity as a specific expression of the human being has not so far been taken into account.

3. To conduct the studies necessary for accomplishing the two previous points through the methods of participatory sociology in the different regions of the world.
4. To extract from the conceptual and field work the consequences of women's culture in the different fields contained in the "Agenda for Managing Global Changes" of the Medium-Term Perspective. The points of concern will then become:

Point 1 New values and orientation of responsibilities brought by women's culture into the "universal human values and global responsibilities", particularly the impact of women culture in the renewed awareness of the linkage between culture and development as envisaged in the programmes of the decade of Cultural Development.

Point 2 If women counted in unpaid work, in unlabelled care for other human beings and in the new fields their multipole roles continuously unfold, what "new directions would there be in the world economy"?

Point 3 Participation of women in all cycles of human life, mainly at the stages of human dependence and at the



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4. Conduct of participatory sociological studies among women who are already giving a specific contribution and among young women who are studying at the university. In this context, definition of trends and eventual actions to be taken.
5. Complement to the publication indicated in point 1.: the theoretical study undertaken about women's culture and illustration through the regional studies about equality, the difference and the contribution of women's culture.
6. Consequences for women's education in different cultural environments and at different levels of education.

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