

Seminar Report

On

**“National Environment Policy 2005:
A Gender Perspective”**

February 12, 2009

**Institute of Social and Policy Sciences (I-SAPS)
Islamabad**

Welcome Note

Ms. Rabia Shabbir, Research Assistant, Institute of Social and Policy Sciences (I-SAPS), welcomed and thanked the participants, and introduced them about the policy dialogue. The selection of the topic, she said, sprang from the fact that there is a linkage between development and environmental issues. The environmental issues, like soil erosion, land degradation, air and water pollution, Ozone depletion, and climate change, she said, affect the men and women differently owing to their differential needs, differential roles and responsibilities. However, she asserted that women and poor are more vulnerable to environmental and other disasters. Explaining, she quoted the Stern Review Report 2006. For that reason, she said, valuing the environmental initiatives with gender perspective becomes imperative in order to enable the men and women to perform their roles in a best cost-effective manner that will conserve the environment while accelerating sustainable development. Pakistan too, she said, has tried to be responsive to gender concerns in its National Environment Policy (NEP), 2005. In this context, I-SAPS Seminar, she said, will analyze the policy from a gender perspective while focusing on the gender-environment nexus, and exploring to what extent the NEP has incorporated gender concerns. She then introduced the speaker and the discussant.

National Environment Policy 2005: A Gender Perspective

Dr. Rukhsana Hasan

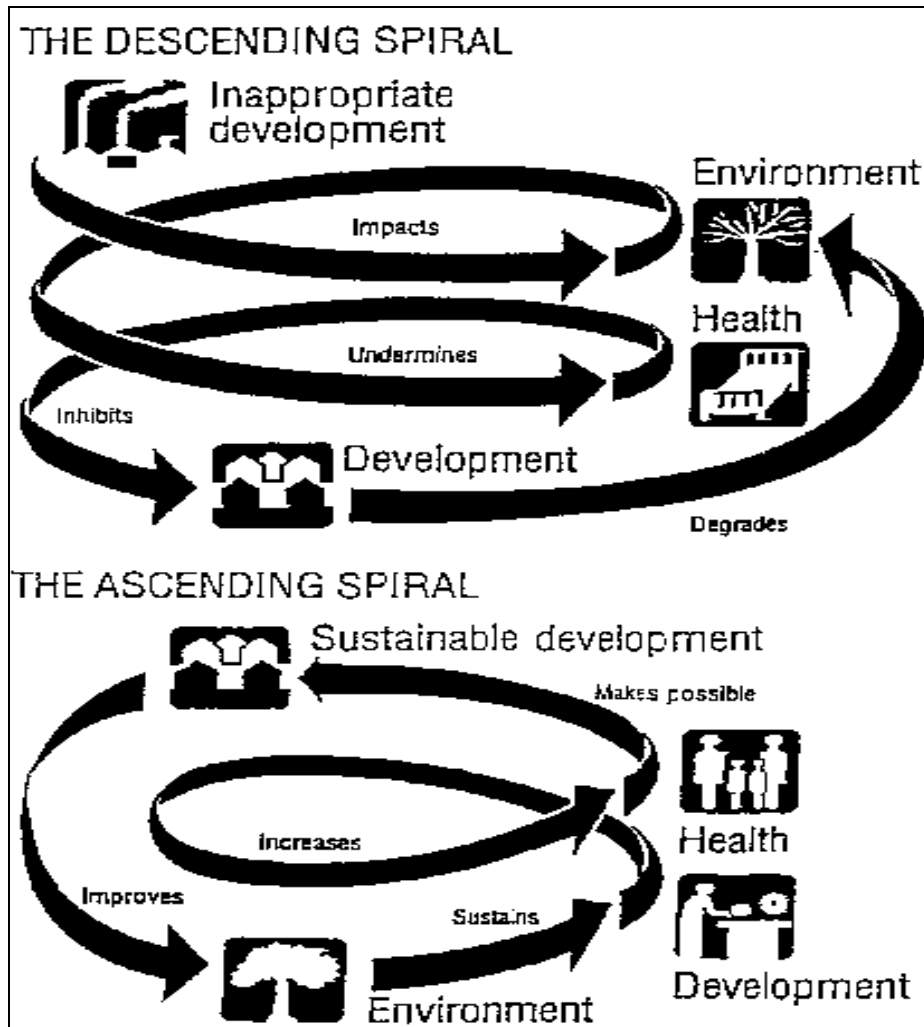
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In the beginning, Dr. Hasan thanked I-SAPS for inviting her to deliver the seminar. She considered it pertinent to discuss the NEP 2005 from a gender perspective and emphasized the need to consider it at policy level. Because gender, she explained, is not linked to one gender only, it includes both male and female, who are affected by resource depletion and environmental degradation differently. Therefore, she said, it is the need of the time to incorporate gender issues in NEP.

Dr. Hasan initiated her presentation with a quote that “Human race is a two winged bird, one wing female and the other male, unless both wings are equally developed, the human race will not be able to fly”. Subsequently, she discussed about the need to debate the gender issues related to environment, and about how these issues came into limelight, during the last two decades. Over the past few years, she explained, people, both scholars and non-scholars alike, have become increasingly concerned with environmental issues, as industrial pollutants, chemical pesticides, fertilizers and nuclear wastes are seeping into the groundwater in many parts of the world. Deforestation, global warming, and extinction of species, she said, are marks of environmental degradation. Therefore, given the enormous scale of environmental crisis, she termed the efforts of going “Green” as small steps that do not touch the heart of the problem.

She said that the relationship between the human society and the physical environment, at first glance, seems to be class and gender neutral, affecting both women and men in a similar way. However, a close examination reveals no neutrality, she explained, owing to differentiated socio-cultural construction of relationships between women and men that works out differently for either sex, age, class groupings, ethnic regions, and religious affiliations. She continued by explaining that “why and how certain system become non-viable”. The inappropriate development, she said, affects the health and development process that leads to environmental degradation. On the other hand, sustainable development will reverse the process, she said.

Chart 1: Influencing Factors in Stable Environment



Source: UNEP, (Rodda 1991)

She continued by citing Nelson 1990. It is a fact, she said, that environmental crisis affects both men and women, but it is well documented that women and children show the effects of toxic pollution earlier than men, either because of their low body weight or because women's bodies become "unhealthy environment" for their babies. Babies without brains, she said, have been born to women on both sides of River Rio-Grande, which is polluted by US controlled Industrial zone in Mexico. Therefore, contact with pesticide and other farm related chemicals, she explained, has led to poor health for many women farm workers and to chronic illnesses and disabilities for their children. Here she gave the example of "Akwasasne Mothers' Milk Project" in upstate New York, which was started in response to women's concern that their breast milk might be toxic and breast-feeding could expose their children to pollutants from the very beginning.

In 1980s, due to the concerted efforts of the organizations like, IUCN, UNEP, and WWF, she said, The World Conservation Strategy was launched, which focused its attention on the social environmental linkages, however, still those linkages ignored gender aspects. In 1984, she proceeded, IUCN made recommendations concerning women and conservation, in its sixteenth

General Assembly in Madrid, and established a working group to promote the involvement of women at all levels of the organization. Following the recommendations of its seventeenth General Assembly in San Jose, in 1988, she continued, the IUCN's Program on Women and Natural Resources was created. It aims to develop more effective conservation programs by drawing attention to the specific roles of women and men, she quoted Rathgeber, 1994. Since the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment in 1972 and publication of Bruntland's Commission Report in 1987, she said, the development planners and policy makers focus their attention on the fact that development and environmental issues are interlinked.

She continued by discussing the theoretical and activists perspective. In the early 1970s, she said, a growing interest in women's relation with the environment emerged in many countries of the world, especially in the development discourse. She said that special relationship with the environment was first highlighted in 'Women, Environment and Development' (WED) approach. Women are described as the main 'users' and 'managers' of natural resources, therefore, she said, starting point of WED is the gender division of labor pointing out that women's work involves their close interaction with the environment and its resources. Typically, women are the providers of water, fuel wood as well as *subsistence crop* in their roles as cultivators, she cited Dankelman, et al, 1988. In many parts of Africa, she explained, women are the producers of *subsistence crops* that are used at household levels, and men are engaged in cash crop production.

She also discussed the term *Ecofeminism*, which was first used by a group of French feminists who founded the *Ecology-Feminism Center in 1974*. They base their perspective, she said, on the connection between masculinist social institutions and the destruction of physical environment. Whereas, few years later in the US, Susan Griffin (1978) and Carolyn Merchant (1980) put forward their insight of eco-feminism, the connection between the domination of women and domination of nature, she explained. In their point of view, she said, *The Western Thought and Science* has treated nature as wild and hostile that needed to be mastered. The view was further strengthened by Vandana Shiva (1988), she explained, who pointed out that in *Western Model of Development Sources*, living things that can reproduce life – whether forests, seeds, or women's bodies – are turned into resources to be objectified, controlled and used, which makes them productive in economic terms. Objectification, she said, means to use the individual or anything as an object of which we have property rights. Conflict of *ecofeminism*, she said, emerged in the debate of gender and environment.

A core point in eco-feminist analysis, she explained, involves the concept of dualism where various attributes are thought of in terms of oppositions; like nature/culture, body/mind, female/male, primitive/civilized to name a few. Eco-feminism, she said, links racism and economic exploitation to the domination of women and nature. She quoted Val Plumwood (1993), who argues that these dualisms are mutually reinforcing, and in each set, one side is valued over other. In his opinion, she said, dualism is the logic of hierarchical system of thought, colonialism, racism and militarism rely on the idea of otherness, and inferiority to justify superiority and domination. *Ecofeminists*, she said, argue that there are important connection between domination and oppression of women and the domination and exploitation of nature.

In patriarchal thought, she considered women closer to nature and men closer to culture. As nature is seen as inferior to culture, she explained, so women are considered inferior to men. As domination of women and nature have occurred together, therefore, she said, it is in the interest of women to end the domination of nature by culture. For that reason, feminist movement and environmentalists movement both stand for egalitarian and non hierarchical systems, she said. It calls upon women and men, she continued, to revamp their relationship to one another and to non-human world in nonhierarchical ways.

In communities around the world, she termed the rural households as important natural resource users and managers, where each family member has different roles, responsibilities, opportunities, and constraints in managing natural resources both within the household and in the community. She said that the differential access to natural resources by gender is an important dimension that governs who utilizes land, forests, water, and other resources, and in what ways. She quoted Shiva 1989; Mies 1993; and Shiva 1993, which state that women's extensive experiences with the natural environment make them an invaluable source of knowledge and expertise on environmental management and appropriate actions.

She also quoted Rocheleau 1985 (in Dankelman and Davidson 1989), according to which most rural families are directly dependent upon their immediate environment and their own skills in using it for the daily necessities of life. A number of interacting processes, she continued, are squeezing many of these people. Socio-economic and political factors, such as the privatization of common property resources, and inappropriate land use policies, she said, can have a negative impact on them. She gave the example of privatization of land that may reduce the amount of land, which is available to a family for grazing. She said, a decision must be made whether to maintain the same number of animals in poor condition on the smaller area, or to destock the herd, which may result in a loss of household income, savings, security, and status.

Environmental degradation, she continued, affects all family members in the same way. However, environmental degradation affects poor men, women and children most, she quoted FAO 1993f, since it threatens their food supply, incomes and health, and at the same time, they have the fewest resources to cope with these stresses. Of these groups, she presumed poor women as particularly vulnerable to environmental change, which has led to feminization of poverty.

She proceeded by quoting a report of Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), which states, "Climate change impacts will be differently distributed among different regions, generations, age classes, income groups, occupations and genders". By quoting Neumayer and Pluempfer, 2007 she said that women can be more vulnerable to the negative impacts of natural hazards due to their socio-economic position within societies. By citing Feldstein, 1994, she explained that *gender analysis involves examining the relationships of men and women in a specific place and time, and understanding the division of labor, access and control to resources, decision-making processes and power dynamics by age, gender, race, ethnicity and other socially defined roles.*

In this context, Dr. Hasan analyzed the National Environment Policy 2005 from a gender perspective, which aims "*to improve the quality of life of people of Pakistan through conservation, protection and improvement of the country's environment and effective cooperation among government agencies, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders*". She also stated the objective of the NEP, which is "*to secure a clean and healthy environment for the people of Pakistan. Attain sustainable economic and social development with due regard to protecting the resource base and the environment of the country. Ensure effective management of the country's environment through active participation of all stakeholders*".

Afterwards, she presented the analysis of sectoral guidelines. The sectoral guidelines section 3.1, she lamented, does not take into consideration the gender issues and especially women's role in the water supply and Management. Section 3.1 a, b, d, e, and f, she said, deals with increase coverage of water supply and treatment facilities, installation of water treatment plant, low cost water treatment technologies at community and household level, and promotion of appropriate technologies for rainwater harvesting, respectively. In sub section b and d, she furthered, the issues related to gender are crucial as per socio-cultural norms of our society, which restrict

women's mobility both in urban and rural areas. She emphasized the need to spell out where these facilities will be, as women are primarily responsible for household water needs, especially in rural areas of Pakistan, like many other communities of the world. Similarly, she also talked about the section 3.1 e and f of the policy, and posed some questions. The section, she said, does not take into account that who will benefit from these technologies at the community as well as household level, what will be the mechanism of promoting those technologies, and to what extent the promotion of technologies will incorporate the socio-cultural norms, especially *pardah*.

Likewise, the subsection 3.1.j and m, she said, deals with the promotion of integrated watershed management and launching of programs for cleaning up and up-gradation of quality water bodies, respectively. In this section, she continued, there is no mention that who will be involved in the promotion of integrated watershed management and launching of programs for cleaning up and up-gradation of quality water bodies. If, she queried, communities are involved, then who within the communities will be drawn into the process and what will be the mechanism. Section 3.2 of NEP, she said, is related to 'Air Quality and Noise', which talks about establishing and enforcing standards for indoor air quality. She said that potentially it is sensitive towards the women because they suffer most while using stoves and other biomass fuels that are harmful to their health. However, she wanted it to be mentioned in a clear language that it is harmful for the health of women, children and elderly who have to spend more time indoors.

The section 3.4 c and e of the policy, she said, relate to forestry that deals with the promotion of farm forestry, and developing and implementing strategies to rehabilitate mangrove forest with the participation of local communities, respectively. It also, she said, does not take into consideration gender issues. She again posed some serious question that who within the community will be involved in the promotion of farm forestry, and developing and implementing strategies to rehabilitate mangrove forest with the participation of local communities. If, she queried, both men and women are involved then, considering the prevailing socio-cultural norms, what mechanism will be used to encourage women participation. Policy is also silent on the issue of research and training of local communities regarding the management of natural resources, she added.

One of the subsections of the policy, she said, relates to promoting the management of pest and discourage the indiscriminate use of agrochemicals, which indicates that it takes into account the aspect of health. Although, agrochemicals are harmful for both men and women farmers, she said, in fact women and children are the worst sufferers because of accidents. Again, she continued, the policy is dealing with various issues in isolation. For example, when it talks about preventing soil degradation developing strategies to combat desertification, she said, it is not considering various socio-economic and political factors that force resource users to become resource degraders.

Section 4.2 h, she said, ensures the equitable access to land and other environmental resources. Here again, she points that the policy seems to be gender blind because, at one hand, it talks about the equitable access to land and resources, and on the other hand, it neglects the realities on ground. That is, she explained, within prevailing socio-cultural norms, women not only lack the access and control over resources and decision making power, but it also discourages women, especially in the rural areas, to exercise their control. Although the section 4.3 of the policy, she said, specifically deals with the issue of gender, but instead of having it in an isolated section, it should be incorporated in all the above-mentioned sectoral and cross-sectoral guidelines.

In the end, Dr. Hasan concluded that the effective solutions to ecological problems must be based upon recognition of the diversity that exists in rural settings around the world. Environmental resources and conditions have a significant impact on many aspects of poverty and development,

she said, and achieving environmental sustainability is fundamental to achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Integrating environment as a crosscutting issue, she continued, indicates that there are direct linkages between environment and achieving poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods. Therefore, to develop an operational framework and effective public policy, she said, issues like access and control over resources should be taken into consideration, and without considering these issues, a policy will not be able to meet its intended outcomes. She added that the link between women and environment can be seen as structures by a given gender and class organization of production, reproduction and distribution.

Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri

Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad.

Dr. Suleri started by appreciating Dr. Hasan's presentation and lauded the *Ecofeminist* theoretical part of her presentation. He said that, firstly, we need to look at the sustainable development, which has many definitions. However, the definition, which he quotes most often for sustainable development, is "promotion of peace, promotion of justice and promotion of well-being within and across the nations and societies". He continued by saying that the absence of peace, social justice and well-being has generated vulnerabilities, where women, children, elderly people and poor are particularly vulnerable.

Referring to the second dimension of the puzzle, he said, environment or climate change is the force that is, some how, decelerating the pace of globalization. Otherwise, he said, globalization could have been much unbidden. Mainly due to environmental concerns, he said, we are putting a stop to globalization, strategies, and achievements. In the absence of taking care of these concerns, he continued, we will again be inviting further vulnerabilities.

He defined the climate change, in the simplest form, as 'uncertainty'. When someone feels, he said, that during monsoon, one does not have any rain and during winter, one does not have enough temperature for agriculture and for keeping the ecological system balanced. Low frequency and very high impact events, he said, are changing the whole dimension of our development. We are entering an era of uncertainty, he said, where there would be added vulnerability. Here, he referred to the Millennium Development Goals. He exemplified that MDG 1, which is poverty reduction and MDG 7, which is environment conservation, have tendency to contradict each other. In efforts to implement the MDG 1 to reduce poverty, he explained, there might be compromise on environmental goals. On the other hand, if the focus is on MDG 7, he continued, employment, "industrial development" and infrastructure development would be compromised.

Another example that he quoted was the project, which was conceived by the government of Punjab. It was one of the projects, he said, meant to take care of poverty issues, and was meant to create more employment, and to bring more Foreign Direct Investment. However, at the same time, they were ignoring the MDG 7, he added. He expressed that poverty is always policy led poverty. When policies fail to take care of social justice, well-being, and fail to create resilience in the society, they promote vulnerabilities, he reiterated. He continued by defining the poor, which means 'someone who is more vulnerable, and is unable to cope with external or internal shocks'. This whole debate, he said, then becomes political economy of policy formulation.

He lamented that Pakistan's NEP was not formulated with well-informed thorough discussion, and stakeholder participation. He termed it as a major problem. The environment, he said, is not only the green environment. There is a need to take care of various sectors of environment, he continued, which are green, blue and brown that is our natural resources, water resources and

industrial resources, respectively. He also pointed towards other important actors and factors that shape and affect our whole environment. These are, he said, trade, political economy, and distribution of resources. When we are talking of sustainable environment, all of these, he said, need to be taken into consideration. In NEP, he lamented, most of these elements are missing. He pointed towards Dr. Hasan's presentation, which stated that how various segments of the society would be affected differently. He also pointed towards the case studies that Dr. Hasan quoted, to indicate no provision of taking some gender steps.

In all our policies, he said, gender is included as a cross-cutting theme, which he feels is undermining the gender issues, and fails to define the differential roles of men and women. Therefore, he thinks that gender issues should be made the focus of the policies to reduce vulnerabilities to various genders, creed, and various segments of the basis of economy. He also suggested exclusion of the cross-cutting thing from our policies, to think of some gendered actions. The second thing, he said, is to think of more holistic approach. From various policy interventions, he said, we can enter an arena where we would be trying to achieve some excellent results. However, he said, they may still be contradicting on how we can have gender equality, gender empowerment, and gender equity. Without these things, he said, social justice would not prevail, and consequently, we would not have well-being and sustainable development.

He said that the trans-disciplinary approach can perhaps lead to the solutions. Trans-disciplinarity, he explained, means to think beyond inter-disciplinarity, and to take care of all those stakeholders who would be affected by that particular action or policy. It is those people, he said, who define our research agenda, and unless and until, they do not define our research agenda and policy formulation process, we would be producing excellent policies but those would be gender blind and would not be pro-poor, and would not have any match with our ground realities.

Discussion

Following Dr. Suleri's remarks, the floor was opened for discussion. Participants took keen interest in the topic, which led to a scrupulous discussion on the topic of the seminar. The questions ranged from the environmental and gender issues to the focus of the seminar, that how gender issues can be integrated into NEP to make it gender responsive. Participants also presented suggestions and made comments, during the discussion.

(The audio report of the Seminar, available on I-SAPS' website, contains the complete discussion)