

Debate

Integration of Women in Industrial Development – the Fate of the Issue in the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, UNIDO

Abstract

The attitude of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) towards the integration of women in its activities is described, from the International Women's Year in 1975 to the present: the creation of a focal point for women in 1984 and a unit for the integration of women in industrial development in 1986, the unit's range of activities, and its subsequent abolition as a consequence of UNIDO's financial crises and restructuring; finally the situation in early 2009.

Keywords: UNIDO, Unit for the Integration of Women in Industrial Development, gender issues, gender training, gender mainstreaming, appropriate technology for rural women, poverty reduction and women's empowerment

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Development in UNIDO

UNIDO was established in 1966 as a special organ in the United Nations to promote and accelerate industrial development in developing countries and promote international industrial cooperation. Though patterns of production and decision-making varied from country to country, the industrial sector as well as national politics were usually extremely male-dominated. In many countries few women were engaged in industrial activities, and, where they were, they were either concentrated in a limited number of labour-intensive industries at the lowest level of the occupation spectrum or as entrepreneurs in small and micro enterprises, particularly in the informal sector. In national governments women rarely exceeded 10 per cent. The new organisation reflected this gender distribution of labour and power. Extremely few women participated in UNIDO's General Conference (GC) and Industrial Development Board (IDB). In UNIDO's secretariat they generally worked as secretaries, with a few exceptions at higher levels.

The emergence of Women in Development (WID) issues in UNIDO

UNIDO held its Second General Conference in 1975 in Lima, Peru. The Conference coincided with the International Women's Year which was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to promote equality between women and men and ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort. In Lima, member states adopted the *Lima Declaration and Plan of Action on Industrial Development and Cooperation* and, to follow up the UNGA, a sentence was included underlining the need for 'the full integration of women in social and economic activities and, in particular, in the industrialisation process on the basis of equal rights'. The document also provided that equal access to training for industrial professions be ensured for all without discrimination with regard to sex and called for the intensification of the professional and training of management staff including the effective incorporation of women in order to achieve the fullest possible use of available human resources with particular reference to industrial development. The draft text was prepared by the Group of 77, the spokesperson of which at the time was Chafika Sellami-Meslem from the Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and who became director of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women in 1981. At the following session of the Industrial Development Board the Finnish representative with assistance from the UN Secretariat together with Norway, Sweden and twelve other countries proposed a resolution elaborating on the practical implication of the principles relating to women which received unanimous support.

This might appear to be simple, but it required a basic rethinking and possibly a change of approach to the roles of women contrary to the traditional view that women's place was in the home. It also challenged the predominant ideas of what 'industrial development' should entail, focusing on small-scale and rural enterprises, not just advanced technology and large urban plants. In addition, the prevailing view within the UNIDO secretariat was that as far as the role of women in industry was concerned, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) was responsible for their working conditions and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for their education. Industrial development, UNIDO's mandate, was about technology and competitiveness and not about the role of women. Nevertheless, since all UN organisations were required to report to the UN Sec-

retary General on women in development (WID), the issue was added to the workload of a female staff member, Amalia Dahl, a professional (P-4) from Sweden, in the office of the Director for Policy Coordination.

Realising the importance of the issue Amalia Dahl tried to obtain a part time or junior staff member to work with her, but without success. The Executive Director, Abd-El Rahman Khane (1975–1985) from Algeria, did not wish the issue to be actively pursued. He was highly committed to the industrialisation of developing countries, but could not see a role for women in it. Further, coming from a region with the world's lowest rate of women's economic activity, he did not wish to go against established gender roles. In spite of this, with the support of colleagues and member states, Dahl managed to organise an expert group meeting on women in industry in 1978 and the meeting recommended the establishment of an Interdivisional Working Group on the Integration of Women in Industrial Development in the UNIDO secretariat. Amalia Dahl insisted that a high-level male professional chair the working group and the Director of Industrial Operations, Detlev Butaev from Russia, was appointed. The membership was 50/50 men and women, with one representative from each division. The working group was to ensure that every division, in its operational and research activities, developed an awareness of the impact of its work on women and promoted their equal participation.

It took the working group until January 1984 before a full-time staff member was assigned to deal with WID issues. One year before the end of the UN Decade for Women, and the World Conference that was to review and appraise the Decade, the position of a focal point for the integration of women in industrial development was established. It was the result of pressure exerted within the secretariat by the Interdivisional Working Group and outside pressure from member states. The need for a full-time staff member was not generally felt within the organisation or its management, but they did not want to make a poor show at the world conference. The focal point was to be responsible for the promotion, coordination and implementation of the organisation's mandate regarding the integration of women in industrial development. This involved proposing policies and procedures for implementation of the mandate, coordinating and initiating technical assistance projects and developing a network of contacts with relevant inter- and non-governmental organisations (IGOs and NGOs).

The focal point was established in the office of the Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and I was appointed together with a part-time secretary. I had not applied for the job and was no more aware of women's issues than the majority of UNIDO's staff. Appointing a staff member was a cheap and convenient way for the organisation to solve the problem and management could avoid a bothersome, assertive 'feminist' unfamiliar with UNIDO's mandate and working methods. I knew the organisation very well, but I lacked the usual background for this kind of appointment (for example, a degree in sociology). Moreover, the organisation was not willing to give this post the high-level status it was accorded in other UN organisations. However, I was deeply committed to the promotion of the status of women and worked very hard to acquire sufficient knowledge of the issues to be able to define women's role in and contribution to industrial development. In addition, I had to obtain support from the organisation's policymaking bodies in order to change attitudes in a bureaucracy that was largely ignorant about the issues and resistant to change.

With the next General Conference (GC) coming up in August and the preparatory regional conferences on industrial development already organised, from which the draft resolutions to the conference emanated, it was too late to introduce a new item on the agenda of the conference. With support from the Interdivisional Working Group I obtained funding from UNIDO's regular budget to organise three regional workshops on the integration of women in the industrial planning and development process (in Zimbabwe for Africa, in Thailand for Asia and in Guyana for the Caribbean) with women from industry, government departments and NGOs. The recommendations from the workshops were submitted to the GC and a draft resolution prepared. Intensive lobbying was necessary to introduce the resolution and obtain support, as the issue was not on the agenda, but the text was adopted thanks to the efforts particularly of Letitia Shahani from the Philippines. As Assistant Secretary General of the UN Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs she was responsible for the UN Women's Branch as well as the forthcoming Women's Conference. Being based in Vienna, where UNIDO headquarters were also located, she could contact and convince member states' delegations to support the resolution. The text called, inter alia, on member states and UNIDO to promote the increased participation of women in industrial development by integrating their participation in the design and implementation of industrial development

activities and by supporting specific projects for women and to report on the results to the Industrial Development Board.

UNIDO's management did not take the resolution very seriously. The role of women in industry was not recognised by the majority of staff. They felt UNIDO's priority was technological development, and gender had nothing to do with that. After the conference, my boss, the director of the Division of Policy Coordination Abdallah Hacini from Algeria, informed me that I was to be his assistant and, if time permitted, I could work on women. I replied that if I was to carry out the duties outlined in my job description, I could not assume additional duties on a permanent basis. He accepted this, but gave me neither support nor funds and I had very few allies within the secretariat. It was apparently necessary to make a good case why women should be considered in the work of UNIDO. But for that I needed resources.

At the Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985 the delegations of the Netherlands and Norway invited all the UN focal points for women for dinner. I succeeded in convincing the female Minister for Development Cooperation from the Netherlands of the need for research on the role and contribution of women to industrial development in different countries to advance the issue in UNIDO. She provided funds for three country studies, in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. A national steering committee was created in each country and the results were discussed in workshops with representatives from the Ministry of Industry, the national machinery for the advancement of women and NGOs. In all three countries it was the first time that the Ministry of Industry, the women's national machinery and NGOs had worked together on women's participation in industry.

The Unit for the Integration of Women in Industrial Development

The situation improved in 1986 when the status of UNIDO was strengthened. Instead of being a special organ the organisation was converted into a specialised agency, the 16th in the UN family. A new Director General, Domingo L. Siazon Jr. (1985–1993) from the Philippines, took office. He was an excellent manager and, coming from the Philippines, where many women were involved in economic activities, he understood the importance of the contribution of women to combating poverty and promoting development. He established a Unit for the Integration of Women in

Industrial Development in the Industrial Cooperation and Funds Mobilisation Division to act as a focal point for the development, promotion and monitoring of all UNIDO programmes, projects and special activities. The functions of the unit were to:

- develop concepts, strategies and policies
- provide advice to governments, IGOs, NGOs and industrial support institutions
- develop tools and guides to facilitate the consideration of women's issues in operational activities
- provide support to technical staff
- develop and monitor programmes and projects to facilitate the participation of women in mainstream development, such as skills training and development of appropriate technologies for rural women, and negotiate their funding with multilateral and bilateral donors
- develop and deliver WID sensitisation training programmes for headquarters and field staff
- represent UNIDO at UN, international, national and NGO meetings and prepare position papers for these meetings and the GC and IDB

I was appointed coordinator of the unit with an additional professional staff member and a full-time secretary. In addition, I successfully negotiated with Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and Norway to obtain associate experts. Young professional women from these countries joined the unit for two- to three-year terms paid by the donors. By the time I retired from UNIDO in 1994, the personnel resources of the unit had been expanded to include six professional and two secretarial staff members. Equally important was the seed money provided from Norway for various activities. Without these funds the unit would have been a lame duck (see Skard, 2008). Later we received funding for specific projects from Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

A special issue was the level of the unit. All heads of units were at P-5 level, with the exception of the head of the WID unit. It was only at P-4. At the time of my appointment in 1984, I was a professional at P-3 and was promoted to P-4. It was quite a challenge, but fortunately, my low level did not impair my work. I participated, as the others, in management seminars and retreats for senior managers. I was a member of all substantive task forces

and was able to ensure that the Integration of Women in Industrial Development was one of 11 priority themes in UNIDO's medium-term plan 1990–1995. My outside contacts were not aware of my low level. In 1990–91 the post was upgraded to P-5 upon the request of my boss at the time, Herbert May from the UK, who was very supportive of women's issues.

Experiences with gender mainstreaming

To improve our knowledge the unit organised workshops on women in industry in Asia and Latin America and commissioned studies on the role of women in specific industrial sub-sectors and the impact of new technologies on their work. We also developed guidelines for the consideration of women's issues in project design, management and evaluation in UNIDO and initiated a data base on women in industry to facilitate the mainstreaming of gender issues in operational and research activities. The guidelines were very detailed and published as an addendum to the main body of guidelines, so they were not applied extensively. With hindsight, it is clear that they should have been less detailed and incorporated under each heading in the main file. Introducing a crosscutting gender perspective has to be more than a once-off. It affects the entire planning and implementation process, from needs assessment and formulation to monitoring and evaluation. Besides, experts and staff under pressure rarely took the time to look at addenda. Also, given the technical nature of UNIDO's activities and the high competition in industry, the focus was on technology and economic viability rather than target groups and human resources. However, with the introduction of Objective Oriented Project Planning (OOPP) in the early 1990s significant inroads were made in devoting greater attention to beneficiaries and human resource development.

The unit attached a WID/gender expert to selected project missions and large-scale projects to ensure that women's potential contributions were duly recognised and promoted. The effectiveness was evident in a large-scale leather regional project in Africa. A woman tanner from Zimbabwe with gender expertise analysed constraints and opportunities for women in the industry and in discussions with managers she was able to reduce barriers for women's employment and upward mobility. She also developed training courses for women within the framework of the project. It was clearly important that the gender experts had expertise in the

project area to be able to negotiate on an equal footing with other experts and local counterparts.

Projects specifically targeting women included skills training which, apart from improving specific skills, was designed to assist women in overcoming attitudinal and environmental constraints and ensure their access to markets and credit. The projects included the development and dissemination of appropriate labour- and energy-saving technologies for rural women as well as the upgrading of technologies traditionally used by women. One of the projects developed in cooperation with UNIDO's Engineering Industries Section was a multi-purpose platform that took domestic tasks like milling and husking sorghum, millet, maize and other grains, normally done by hand with a mortar and pestle or a grinding stone, and mechanised them, making them profitable economic activities. The platform could also generate electricity for lighting, refrigeration and pumping water. It was created as a prototype in Mali and Burkina Faso and provisions had to be made to ensure that it was not taken over by men once it became profitable. In 2008 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation awarded a four-year grant of US\$19 million to a poverty reduction and women's empowerment project that will establish 600 of these multi-purpose platforms in Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal.

With funds from Norway the unit developed a generic training programme for women entrepreneurs in food processing, which was subsequently adapted to the situation in different contexts and introduced in many countries in Africa, Central America, and Asia, including China.

We developed and conducted gender training for different categories of UNIDO staff. We realised that training had to be very context-specific. It had to have a direct reference to the responsibilities of the staff, otherwise it was useless. The training had to be built around case studies related to UNIDO projects and it was important to present arguments why the work would be more effective if staff took gender into account.

The unit tried to convince colleagues in UNIDO through dialogue, factual evidence and research. A small minority was eager to consider gender issues and appreciative of the tools to do so. Others were less committed, but had an open mind and were willing to try out the tools. Hard-core opponents, on the other hand, were unwilling to be convinced by any argument. Generally, field staff were far more receptive to the issues than headquarters staff. They were confronted with concrete problems and situations, and

the challenge to find effective solutions, so they appreciated the support the unit was able to provide.

Gender issues sidelined

For the 1995 Women's World Conference in Beijing we prepared regional studies on women in manufacturing in cooperation with the UN Regional Commissions. We analysed the participation of women and the economic and social determinants of the participation. The studies provided statistical data and made recommendations relating to development trends and challenges for women. A publication based on the studies was published with funds from the Netherlands and Norway.

I retired in 1994, but continued to work as a consultant on gender issues for UNIDO and followed developments in the organisation as permanent representative to UNIDO of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW).

UNIDO sent a large team to the Beijing Conference. One of UNIDO's managing directors, Archalus Tcheknavorian-Asenbauer, director of the Industry Sectors and Environment Division, who saw herself as a great feminist, headed the delegation. She was very good at public relations, but had little notion of gender issues in industry. An Industry Day was organised during the Conference for which UNIDO's Director General, Mauricio de Maria y Campos (1993–1997) from Mexico, travelled to Beijing. However, neither the studies we had prepared for the conference nor the conclusions recommending a way forward for women in industry in the five regions were presented.

Back in Vienna there was little follow-up. A draft plan of action was prepared, but received no consideration. The unit was transferred to the Human Resources Development Branch and reduced to three staff members. UNIDO had severe financial problems. The global market economic system made some member states feel that industrial development could be left to the private sector, and Australia, Canada and the United States (UNIDO's then largest donor) withdrew from UNIDO. Simultaneously, slowdown of the economies of major industrialised countries and financial turmoil in Asia caused multilateral development assistance to decline. Weak management in UNIDO aggravated the crisis. In 1997, UNIDO faced the risk of closure. The new Director General, Carlos Magariños (1997–2005) from Argentina, undertook a total overhaul of the organisation. He completely restructured it,

refocused its programmes and services and reduced the staff. The Unit for the Integration of Women in Industrial Development was abolished.

A Business Plan for the Future Role and Functions of UNIDO was adopted in 1997 to reorient the organisation's activities to the realities of a changing global economic environment and ensure its viability and efficiency. Although the Plan stipulated that emphasis should be given to the integration of women in industrial development, there was no reference to gender policy or procedures to facilitate gender mainstreaming and no mechanisms to advise and monitor the issue after the abolition of the Women's Unit. The only UNIDO programme with a focus on women was the Rural and Women Entrepreneurship Unit. The unit worked to improve the skills of rural and women entrepreneurs and promote an encouraging environment for entrepreneurship. The projects were based on the training programme for women entrepreneurs that we developed. Although highly effective, the projects were isolated interventions. They could not replace gender analysis and consideration in UNIDO's technical assistance and research activities focusing on areas such as:

- poverty reduction through productive activities
- trade capacity building
- development of and access to renewable sources of energy and protection of the environment

Member states participated actively in the reorientation of UNIDO's activities after the financial crisis, but ignored the integration of women/gender issues. In 2002, the Government of Japan, UNIDO's then largest contributor to the regular budget, submitted Strategic Guidelines to the IDB with a view to making UNIDO a more efficient organisation. The guidelines stressed areas upon which UNIDO should focus its technical cooperation activities and outlined critical issues in the provision of services. They made no reference to gender considerations or to the integration of women in industrial development, even though they cited the Plan from the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a basis for the recommendations. The omission was pointed out to a number of delegates from member states by NGO representatives prior to approval of the guidelines. They fully agreed in conversations, but approved the guidelines without inclusion of gender considerations.

In 2003, an advisor to the Director General, responsible for interagency coordination – Fernando Requelme from Spain – wanted to be able to respond to questions about UNIDO’s gender mainstreaming and commissioned me to prepare a policy concept document for gender mainstreaming in UNIDO. The paper included concrete proposals related to UNIDO programmes and the text was circulated to staff, but to my knowledge never presented to the Director General. Several months after the completion of the paper the adviser was asked by a colleague what had happened to it. He replied: ‘It is in a drawer waiting for a good moment.’ As far as I know, the good moment never arrived during the tenure of Margariños. By the time he left UNIDO, the text was outdated.

A new beginning?

In 2006, a new Director General, Kandeh K. Yumkella from Sierra Leone, took office and it seems that things slowly started to improve. Coming from Africa, Yumkella is well acquainted with the challenges related to development in poor, dependent countries with a large rural sector, and in Sierra Leone women have traditionally played key roles in production and economic life. In 2007, UNIDO commissioned a study on gender mainstreaming in cluster development and a Special Adviser to the Director General on the MDGs, a male professional from Norway, Ole Lundby, was given the task of advocating gender mainstreaming within the organisation on the basis of MDG 3 to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. In 2008, UNIDO’s top management recognised the need for a comprehensive gender policy and decided that ‘UNIDO should formulate a gender policy covering its internal processes and its external technical cooperation and global forum activities’. An expert dialogue on women’s economic empowerment and entrepreneurship with representatives from development banks, the private sector, the UN system, member states and the media was organised to strengthen gender mainstreaming efforts within the organisation. The participants recognised that UNIDO needed more systematic efforts based on UN system-wide policy guidelines. Following the dialogue, the UN Secretary General’s Special Adviser on Gender Issues, Rachel N. Mayanja, requested UNIDO to take the lead on women’s economic empowerment within the UN system.

A Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women was approved by UNIDO's top management in March 2009. The policy reflects the recommendations made by the UN Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB) and recognises that 'change is needed in the policies and organisational culture of the secretariat and in its substantive programmes and projects'. It outlines operational guidelines and institutional arrangements. A gender mainstreaming steering committee to oversee the implementation has been established under the leadership of Ole Lundby.

Prerequisites for the successful integration of women/gender issues in UNIDO's activities

Two key elements necessary for the successful integration of gender issues in UNIDO's activities are management commitment and pressure from member states.

Management

UNIDO's top management has always been male. Personal and cultural attitudes within the leadership in addition to structural constraints were generally not conducive to furthering the integration of women in industrial development. It was pressure from policymaking organs (GC and IDB) and from within the organisation – the Interdivisional Working Group – that obliged Executive Director Abd-El Rahman Khane to establish a focal point for women in 1984. But it was intended to be a token commitment only.

The only time UNIDO was fully committed to the integration of women in industrial development and to gender mainstreaming was from 1986 to 1993 under the Director General from the Philippines, Domingo L. Siazon Jr. Under his management, the Women's Unit was established and able to work without obstruction. The fact that it was possible to mobilise financial resources (over US\$7 million) from member states (more than half of it from the Government of Norway) contributed in no small measure to the acceptance of the women's issues.

Between 1994 and 1996, when the financial crisis hit UNIDO, commitment from both top management and member states diminished. Women/gender issues disappeared as a separate item on the agenda of the policymaking organs and the Women's Unit

ceased to exist. The Director General during this transitional period was Mauricio de Maria y Campos from Mexico. He was not opposed to women's issues, but not particularly committed either and gave priority to more immediately pressing concerns.

There was no way Director General Carlos Magariños could be persuaded to adopt a policy for gender mainstreaming or to appoint a focal point for gender. In his view, the organisation fulfilled its mandate through the Unit for Rural and Women Entrepreneurship Development with its women entrepreneurship development programme. Ironically, it was while he chaired the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in 2000 that the Executive Heads of the organisations committed the UN system to adopting a gender mainstreaming policy.

The present Director General, Kandeh K. Yumkella, coming from Africa, is fully aware of the economic role of women. He seems committed to reinstating a gender mainstreaming strategy in UNIDO. The future will tell to what degree this will materialise.

Member states

Pressure from member states came from both industrialised and developing countries. To improve the status of women, industrialised countries had to fund programmes that supported the integration of women in industrial development throughout UNIDO's activities, and developing countries had to recognise the vital contribution of women to their economic and social development. As members of the IDB¹ and delegates to the GC² both had to support the issue in UNIDO's governing bodies. Commitment and support were required of member states both at country level (mostly ministries of industry as UNIDO's counterparts) and at the diplomatic level by the diplomatic missions in Vienna, as members of the IDB and delegates to the GC.

In the 1980s, we had the peculiar situation that the diplomatic missions in Vienna were more sensitised to the issue of women

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- 1 Members of the IDB are permanent representatives to UNIDO from member states and generally part of their countries' diplomatic missions in Vienna.
 - 2 Delegates to the General Conference from developing countries are ministers of industry, economy or finance, or the permanent representatives to UNIDO plus representatives of these ministries. Delegates from developed countries are representatives from their Ministry for Development Cooperation and permanent representatives to UNIDO.

in industry than the officials in the ministries of industry at field level. In addition to UNIDO, the Vienna missions were accredited to the UN Commission on the Status of Women that met in Vienna, and were therefore familiar with women's issues. At country level, the ministries of industry frequently did not deal with the national machinery for the advancement of women, which was responsible for women in industry, but at the same time the national machinery was primarily concerned with social issues, not industrial development.

With time the situation reversed. After the UN Division for the Advancement of Women was transferred from Vienna to New York at the end of the 1980, it became far more difficult to lobby delegates to the IDB and the UNIDO GC. At field level the situation gradually improved and at the turn of the century, when I undertook needs assessment missions for the development of women entrepreneurship, I found open doors both in ministries of industry and national machineries for women and keen interest in projects. However, by that time gender had disappeared as an item on the agenda of UNIDO's policymaking organs.

Gradually, the number of women increased in member state's delegations to UNIDO. At the last GC in 2007, 70 per cent of the member states had at least one woman on the delegation and 12 per cent of delegations were headed by women. In spite of this increase, the status of women in the UNIDO secretariat was last addressed in the policymaking organs in the 1990s. In 1990, targets were set to achieve 25 per cent women professionals overall in the secretariat by 1993 and 30 per cent by 1995. The last comprehensive report on the status of women in the secretariat was presented in 1999. Since then the representation of women professionals has been fluctuating between 25 and 28 per cent and at the decision-making level (P-5, D-1 and D-2) between 11 and 16 per cent.

Interventions by NGOs

Since 1997, when women/gender disappeared as an item on the agenda of the policymaking organs, the women NGOs accredited to UNIDO (the International Council of Women, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW) and Soroptimist International) have made joint statements pointing out the omission and demanding attention to women's/gender issues in all UNIDO's programmes. We circulated the texts to

member state delegations prior to the GC, hoping the issues would be taken up, but without evident success. Although a large number of NGOs make statements in the policymaking bodies, these have little effect. They are usually scheduled at a time when plenary sessions are practically empty, because most delegates are in committee meetings or have left, and the contents of the statements are not included in the records.

Personal observations

My first two years as a focal point, before the unit was created, were a very lonely and rough time. I had practically no backing from the top, very few allies in the organisation and met with quite a lot of antagonism. During my first year, a visit by Torild Skard, the high-level director focal point for women in UNESCO, on her tour to UN agencies gave great encouragement. The meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women and the interagency meetings of the UN focal points provided a welcome opportunity to meet women dedicated to the advancement of their sisters around the world. Later I had the opportunity to meet my colleagues from the UN system in a more relaxed atmosphere at the informal consultations on strategies for women in development, organised by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The focal points from UN organisations were invited in their personal capacity, not as representatives of their respective organisations. We had a very frank exchange of the problems we faced and the tactics we used, and always returned with new energy and resolve to succeed in our jobs (see Skard, 2008).

Once the unit was established, we were a strong team with highly motivated young women, supportive of each other's work and the aims of the unit. There were not many women professionals in the UNIDO secretariat and not all of them were allies in the quest for gender equality, but some were and all served as role models in their field activities as chemical engineers, leather experts, economists, and so on. Some male colleagues were also supportive.

I believe UNIDO in 1993 was on a good path towards paying proper attention to gender in its operational and study activities. A number of prerequisites were in place. The Director General was supportive; a good body of research documented economic reasons for increasing the quality, status and level of women's participation in industry and the economic and social opportunity cost of not

doing it; tools to facilitate gender mainstreaming were available. Yet, general gender awareness among the majority of staff was still lacking.

Changing approaches and practice turned out to be very demanding; it took time, systematic efforts and resources. My assumption that the experience gained with three studies on *Human Resources in Industrial Development – the Current and Prospective Participation of Women* would be an eye-opener to the organisation's economists conducting them, proved to be wrong. I had assumed that it would lead to the consideration of the role and contribution of women in their future work, but after the completion of the studies they went back to business as usual. Their work did not take into account the role of women, and they did not try to bring in a gender perspective. It would have been the organisation's responsibility to issue instructions that forced them to change their practice.

The gender training we carried out was never institutionalised. Due to staff turnover, especially as a result of the considerable staff reduction on account of the financial crisis, the effects of the training we did carry out were largely lost. It would need to be part of all staff induction courses to have a lasting effect.

If gender mainstreaming is difficult in normal circumstances, it can become virtually impossible in times of crisis. The down-sizing and restructuring of UNIDO between 1995 and 1997 – the result of its financial crisis – were not conducive to the development of gender sensitivity, and the momentum built up by the unit was lost. To prevent this, special commitment on the part of management would have been required, but it was lacking.

Developments in UNIDO are dependent on guidance from member states and the UN system. The fact that, in 2009, the organisation seems to be on the point of implementing a policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women is the result of a new effort on the part of the whole UN system to counteract insufficient progress in achieving gender equality and mainstreaming. The UN Secretary General requested the members of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) to develop, in cooperation with the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, a system-wide gender mainstreaming policy and strategy that was endorsed by the CEB in 2006.

I have always been amazed how UNIDO, as part of the UN system, was allowed to neglect women's issues for more than a

decade after the abolition of the Unit for the Integration of Women in Industrial Development. The Nordic countries, in meetings with the Director General, urged him to appoint a focal point and adopt a gender mainstreaming policy. But they did not follow up at the IDB and the GC, so there was no binding decision for him to follow suit. UNIDO should now speedily implement the Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women approved by the top management and devote adequate financial and staff resources to develop proper gender competence and apply it to UNIDO's activities. This is imperative at a time when it is vital to ensure that the financial and economic crisis does not have a disproportionately negative impact on women in developing countries and countries in transition.

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