

the outskirts of Nairobi were three very large squatter's settlements.

As well as attending the conference, NGO people were encouraged to visit women's projects in rural areas. Despite a fear that these were a few, isolated "model" women's projects we were being shown – rather than a widespread trend to fund women's development projects – we found the rural projects we visited to be a monument to women's drive, creativity and hard work. In all the villages and slum settlements, the women seemed to be the motivating force behind development. And although already overworked with home, family and growing all their food plus some cash crops, these women somehow found the energy to do extra work on the projects besides. And the projects we saw were working and making life a little more positive for the women involved: they provided a little more income and a lot more respect – self-respect and respect from the village. Women were beginning to see they could take control and improve their lives and the lives of their children. Some of the projects we visited included a spinning and weaving workshop in Kibera, a bakery and shops complex in Machakos, and an agricultural project in a squatter's slum outside Nairobi. Although the amount of hard work was awesome, progress was being made. There was at least some government funding of women's projects, with women project officers. But there was also much more to be done to make the lives of these women and children easier.

Forum '85 had many positive results. The presence of 13,000 concerned women in Nairobi is a clear signal to the UN and to governments all over the world that women's issues are of vital concern to the well-being of all nations and that governments ignore them at their peril. National and global women's networks were formed and strengthened. Women analyzed the progress of the past decade and discussed together effective strategies and proposals for the future. And each individual woman who went came home with new knowledge and a new commitment to women's issues and development, creating a ripple effect all over the world. The Nairobi conference was not an "End of Decade" Conference that marked the end of women's development. Instead it is the beginning of a new era for women's advancement to the year 2000.



The message is clear for NGO's: women's development is the only path to real community development in the Third World, as women hold the key to primary health care, nutrition, food production, education and lowered population growth. Meaningful development can not take place when half the world's population is subjugated. The United Nations and governments the world over are more aware than ever of this vital need to improve the status of women; more and more governments have set up women's ministries and made women in development a key component in overseas aid and development programs. NGO's in Canada have a responsibility to consider women's development in their overseas projects and in their organizations at home.

The Nairobi conference has demonstrated the importance of a women's perspective on development. In fact, the future of the world might just depend on it!

Janet Laidlaw was in Nairobi as a Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) "Women in Development" Working Group delegate; CCIC, founded in 1968, is a national coalition of more than 100 Canadian non-governmental organizations working for international development overseas and development education in Canada. She is a regional co-ordinator for Canada World Youth. Her expertise as a woman farmer derives from her experience as the owner-operator of a 400-head livestock (Angora goats) operation in Cariboo, British Columbia.

UNDERSTOOD

The only desirable companions are jet-set models.
Only jet-set models make the cover of Vogue.

I covered poetry for Vogue.

Blondes have more fun.
Large-nosed people have less fun.
Senior singles live on yellow submarine sandwiches.
Writing poetry is a hobby.

The only woman visible to the naked eye
is the Playmate of the Month.
Subtly beautiful women are invisible after dusk.
Subtle women are invisible.

Begonias are in, petunias are passé.
"Passé" is passé.
Pickled Pepper Power

vs. Nipple Power:
my nine-year-old nephew likes
Jackie Onassis,
the newborn like Maggie Trudeau.
Hairdressers know.

I have no hairdresser,
begonias have no scent, but just the same we like to subtle
up against your nose
Writing poetry is an escape

Like peace from war.
Poppies.
Poppies vs Hobbies:
his scarred face at peace
his scarred face in pleasure
his scarred face in passion

Female poets are called poetesses.
No one who went to school with
your younger sister can ever
be a poetess.
Poetesses live in distance castles.
Poetesses have no taste.

Poetesses are important for posterity.
They record truth.
Truth is passé.

OVERHEARD (a found poem)

I'm tired of being a dumb blonde.
I'm going to go sit by Marvyne.

Marvyne Jenoff
Mississauga, Ontario