



The struggle to legitimize subsistence: women and sustainable development

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The two authors were among the founders of the Women and Shelter Network of the Habitat International Coalition, and this paper presents their position on women, environment and human settlements. Diana Lee-Smith is currently Secretary of the HIC Women and Shelter Network. Catalina Hinchey Trujillo is now the officer dealing with women's issues in UNCHS (Habitat). She is responsible for developing the agency's policy and programme for incorporating women into the Global Strategy for Shelter. The ideas presented in this paper are those of the two authors and do not necessarily represent the views of either UNCHS (Habitat) or the many members of the HIC Women and Shelter Network.

I. INTRODUCTION

WOMEN IN ECOSYSTEMS and women in urban neighbourhoods manage their environments to turn them into useful and, as far as they are able, good quality human sustenance. The careful management of resources for human sustainment would seem to be a useful paradigm for planetary ecological management. Yet the central role that subsistence production takes in the world economy has been ignored. In particular, its role in the livelihood and health of poorer groups in both rural and urban areas has been ignored. This helps explain the lack of concern for protecting the open access and common property resources on which such subsistence production often depends. It is usually women who are affected since they are generally responsible for most subsistence production and it is they who suffer as laws, commercial pressures or development plans deny them access to the resources on which such production is based.

The ideas in this paper have been developed over the past few years as an analysis of the concerns of women at community level, expressed through the Women and Shelter Network by its membership. This analysis has also been developing in the network in response to the debate on environment leading to the Brazil Earth Summit.⁽¹⁾ Most recently, many of these ideas were articulated in a presentation by Diana Lee-Smith at the "Roots of the Future" global NGO conference on environment in Paris in December 1991. The paper also examines some of the analytical positions raised at this and other recent international NGO meetings, all of which provided a wealth of knowledge which has been drawn upon.⁽²⁾

Both the Women and Shelter Network and its parent body, Habitat International Coalition, are activist, non-governmental institutions, concerned with the promotion of people's basic right to shelter.⁽³⁾ The need to develop a conceptual analysis of human settlements and the environment and, in particular, the role of women in this, came about

*What we have learned from the experience of women in poor communities dealing with the problem of how to shelter themselves and their families relates mainly to urbanization. We have also learned a great deal from comparing this knowledge with that of women addressing other issues. Some of this learning was compiled in the last issue of *Environment and Urbanization* (Vol.3, No.2) which focused on women in environment and urbanization. But we also owe a debt to several recent women's conferences, which*

have brought together those engaged in thought and those engaged in action, including many women who are managers of community based projects and organizations.

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1. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in June 1992.

2. The Global Assembly of Women and the Environment (in Miami, USA, 4-8th November 1991), the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet (Miami, 8th-12th November 1991), and the fifth forum of the Association of Women in Development, (Washington DC, USA, 20th-24th November 1991).

3. Habitat International Coalition (HIC) which links non-governmental organizations concerned with shelter and human settlements issues all over the world, recognized the importance of women's role early in its development as an organization. This led to the establishment in 1988 of the network to link organizations working on women and shelter issues at grass roots level. A profile of the network was included in *Environment and Urbanization* Vol.3, No.2 (October 1991). Vol.2, No.1 (April 1990) included a profile of Habitat International Coalition and described its focus on housing rights, and especially its campaign against forced evictions.

4. Barrett, Michele (1980), *Women's Oppression Today*, Verso, London, Chapter Five: "Gender and the division of labour" pages 152-186, gives an analysis as well as broad description of women's labour in industrial societies.

not because we needed to explain or justify our work of promoting people's rights, but because we realized that important conceptual lessons could be learned from, and even theories built upon, the insights gained from practice.

II. SUMMARY OF CONCEPTS AND TERMS

IN SOCIETIES THROUGHOUT the world, women manage subsistence. By this we mean that they manage family or household needs for sustenance on an everyday basis. This role is not limited to the management of the household and community services, the focus of the debate on women and shelter, but also encompasses the management of the local ecosystem, the focus of the debate on women and environment.

Subsistence means sustenance, and it also means sustainment. The careful management of the local resource base to provide for continued human sustenance is something women have long been doing in very many different ecosystems. This is what is required of the whole human community to achieve sustainable development at the planetary level.

By "development", we understand the common meaning of something strengthening, growing or evolving. This "something" is taken to be the human habitat or the planetary ecosystem. We understand the term "sustainable" to mean capable of being maintained in existence, or kept going.

The recognition of the important economic and ecological function of the production of human subsistence has emerged from our work in supporting people's - especially women's - rights. A concern to support people's rights to a secure place to live, meaning the right to housing and shelter, has led to a concern to support people's rights to a secure means of livelihood, ie. the right to subsist.

Planning for development which sets priorities for the use of land stresses those land uses which supposedly create wage employment. In practice, this often results in the denial of the rights of those who live on the land - for instance denying rural inhabitants the right to use farmlands, pastures or forests which have been the basis for their subsistence for generations. Such planning can exacerbate rural to urban migration. But urban migrants may then be denied the right to subsist, even when the employment envisaged by the development planners has failed to materialize.

There is now a confluence of ideas from both indigenous peoples who wish to protect and manage the land they know and live on, and intellectuals who argue that the main purpose of development should be the sustaining of life. This article ends by summarizing some of these ideas, which also reinforce our conclusion that women have a leading role to play in both developing the idea of sustainable development and in managing action to achieve it.

III. WOMEN'S ROLE IN RURAL AND URBAN SUBSISTENCE PRODUCTION

EVEN IN INDUSTRIALIZED societies, the convention is that most domestic labour is performed by women.⁽⁴⁾ Women acquire and process the food consumed by households, as well as managing the

5. Oakley, Ann (1974), *The Sociology of Housework*, Martin Robertson and Co., Oxford, is a classic study which analyzes women's domestic work as a job analogous to any other kind of work.

6. Moser, Caroline and Linda Peake (editors) (1987), *Women, Human Settlements and Housing: a conceptual framework for analysis and policy making*, Tavistock Publications, London and New York.

7. Zimbabwe and Swedish Governments (1987), "Overview of women and shelter in Africa" in *IYSH Women and Shelter Seminar Report*, Swedish Government Printer, Stockholm.

8. See reference 6, pages 12-32.

9. See for example Mitullah, Winnie (1991), "Hawking as a survival strategy for the urban poor in Nairobi: the case of women" in *Environment and Urbanization* 3:2, October, pages 13-22.

10. Cardona, Lucy, Marisol Dal-mazzo, Marie Dominique de Suremain and Catalina Hinchey Trujillo (1990), *Mujeres y la Crisis Urbana*, unpublished manuscript, Bogota.

11. See for example Beijer Institute (1984), *Energy, Environment and Development in Africa :6: Wood Energy and Households*, page 6, Stockholm; Mazingira Institute (1987), *Urban Food Production and the Cooking Fuel Situation in Urban Kenya*, Nairobi; Richard Stren and Rodney White (editors) (1989), *African Cities in Crisis*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado.

12. See reference 11 (Mazingira Institute) - shows that almost two-thirds of urban households in Kenya grow some subsistence crops, and 29 per cent do so in the urban area where they live. In Colombia and Peru, there are increasing numbers of city vegetable gardens *por cogor* (family consumption needs), and most women raise chickens and pigs for consumption.

household.⁽⁵⁾ Studies in the Third World have shown that women have a triple work load in production (earning income), reproduction (managing the household), and community management.⁽⁶⁾

"Housework" in the Third World is a completely different type of activity from housework in industrialized countries. Rural women in Africa, for example, have to collect water and fuelwood for the household, sometimes travelling for hours on foot, grow all the food for domestic consumption, and then harvest, store, process and cook the food. Household management involves varying degrees of building construction and maintenance, depending on cultural tradition. Most agricultural communities in sub-Saharan Africa have a traditional division of labour where men build the structure while women supply the materials, the finishes and the maintenance, except for roofs. In pastoral communities, women do most of the building work.⁽⁷⁾

In urban areas of the Third World, women's work is different again, although still mainly concerned with the production of subsistence. As Moser and Peake point out, many poor women have to earn something to contribute to the household's sustenance, as well as contributing their labour to this end. Moser defines these two activities as "productive" and "reproductive" activities respectively.⁽⁸⁾ Many women undertake petty commodity trade or production, but it has been shown in studies of the informal sector that women predominate in the economically less viable sub-sectors, and the money they receive goes towards subsistence.⁽⁹⁾

Low-income women are particularly hard hit by the lack of services in large areas of Third World towns and cities because of their traditional role in providing fuel and water to the household. When urban authorities fail to provide water supply, sanitation and refuse collection to low-income urban areas because they have inadequate resources, it is the women who have to make up for the lack of such services. They have to work out ways of finding and transporting water and fuel, and keeping their homes reasonably clean, with inadequate support from urban laws and institutions which usually completely fail to comprehend their situation.⁽¹⁰⁾

To take the example of fuel, it is common that the majority of low-income households in urban areas cook with woodfuels,⁽¹¹⁾ and it is the women's job to obtain the fuel and to do the cooking. Yet the planning of housing and residential neighbourhoods seldom, if ever, includes consideration of the sources of woodfuel, where it might be stored or distributed, how housing might be planned to allow for such activities, or what alternative fuels and appliances might be supplied and how women might obtain access to them. On the contrary, there are usually laws which seek to control or constrain the use of woodfuels.

The urban woodfuel "problem" is most commonly seen as one of environmental destruction. Laws are passed to prevent the gathering of wood for fuel around urban centres, meaning that women's fuel gathering is declared illegal, with no consideration as to how women are supposed to cook for their families. The result is usually that women spend increasingly longer periods of time (or more money) acquiring fuel, as well as being constrained into illegal activity.

Urban food and livestock production for subsistence consumption is widespread, but this is usually not appreciated by urban authorities and certainly not planned for or supported. On the contrary, it is often declared illegal and even more often suppressed with harassment for those engaging in it. Such food production is also usually a woman's activity.⁽¹²⁾

The pursuit of subsistence production in urban areas is almost certainly rising due to increasing poverty during the economic recession. Structural adjustment policies also put pressure on the urban poor to provide for their own subsistence. Other policies exacerbate the pressures on rural populations to migrate to urban areas, precisely because they lose access to the resources which were their means of subsistence.

IV. THE DOWNGRADING OF SUBSISTENCE

THERE ARE MANY reasons why poor people previously making their living from subsistence activities in rural areas move to urban areas. Refugees from war and drought are increasingly moving into the cities of Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Conflicts have engulfed numerous nations and ecological crises such as desertification and widespread loss of forest and soil resources have impoverished millions of rural people who leave their homes because the ecosystem that used to support them no longer does so. They move to find new means of subsistence elsewhere, but it is not easy for them to succeed. The result is often increasing malnutrition and starvation.

Population increases have been widely used as the explanation for the factors leading to rural environmental degradation. No doubt such increases are a contributing factor to the degradation of some local environments. However, many local studies have shown that pressures for commercial development of land have a far greater impact on environmental degradation.⁽¹³⁾ Population growth has also been shown to be favourable to rural development.⁽¹⁴⁾

In many poor countries, the domestic unit is the site of most rural production, carried out by both men and women. However, women's role in the production of domestic subsistence has been increased by the migration of male labour which has accompanied colonial and capitalist development.⁽¹⁵⁾

To produce subsistence, women or men make use of the land and manage the local ecosystem. Such land management systems are seldom recorded in legal or other documents. Women in particular rarely have titles to the land they manage. It is comparatively easy for those promoting competing commercial land uses to acquire the land on which many communities rely for the production of their subsistence.

Large numbers of people in rural areas are evicted or in some way forced to leave the land from which they obtain their livelihood, primarily because economic planning priorities are for commercial land uses rather than for subsistence land uses. Subsistence, which means the sustenance of life, but which has come to signify only the minimum of food, clothing and shelter necessary to maintain life, is not accorded much importance.⁽¹⁶⁾ **It would appear to be a historical accident that the activity of sustaining life has been first, assigned to women and second, accorded a low social and economic importance.**

It is important to note therefore that those challenging current development models are often, though by no means only, women. The World Congress for a Healthy Planet in 1991 produced a "Women's Action Agenda 21" for submission to the Brazil Earth Summit, challenging current development models in a number of areas. These include international debt, environmental debt, national accounting

13. Madhu Sarin's article "Improved stoves, women and domestic energy" in *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol.3, No.2 and Brinda Rao's article "Women and water in rural Maharashtra" in the same volume are two such studies.

14. Boserup, Esther (1965), *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth*, Aldine Publishing Co., Chicago.

15. Rogers, Barbara (1989), *The Domestication of Women*, Routledge, London and New York.

16. Fairchild, Henry Pratt (editor) (1970), *Dictionary of Sociology and Related Sciences*, Littlefield, Adams and Co., New Jersey, defines "subsistence level" as "...a plane of living which includes only the minimum of food, clothing and shelter necessary to maintain life."

17. International Policy Action Committee (1991), *World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet, November 8-12, 1991: Women's Action Agenda 21*, WEDO, New York.

18. Ruth Engo of Cameroon, quoted in *HIC Women and Shelter Network Newsletter 4*, February 1992, Nairobi.

19. A useful debate on the issues raised by ecofeminism is contained in *Women and Environments*, Toronto. See especially Vol. 9, No. 2, Spring 1987 and Vol. 10, No. 3, Spring 1988.

20. Waring, Marilyn (1988), *If Women Counted: a new feminist economics*, Harper and Row, San Francisco, is a devastating critique of current economics as thought and practice. It includes an analysis of the system of national accounts with proposals for change, which were further developed during the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet.

systems, military spending, nuclear power, land and food security, and biotechnology.⁽¹⁷⁾

One example is the estimate for Africa that the economic model of export crop production is what has led to the annual loss of 2.7 million hectares of forest apart from other environmental degradation of the continent. African markets are flooded with products from the North while unsaleable mountains of coffee and cocoa are produced locally, and women produce most of the food people eat, but without policy support.⁽¹⁸⁾ Comparable analyses are also possible for Asia and Latin America.

V. SOME ANALYSES OF HOW TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

RECENT DISCUSSIONS AT seminars and conferences have produced a variety of different analytical positions on sustainable development. This includes those articulated at the "Roots of the Future" global NGO conference on the environment, at which the basic ideas so far presented in this paper were also presented. Four interesting perspectives on how "sustainable development" might be achieved can be highlighted, emphasizing value change, political economy, adaptive economics and planning intervention respectively. (These do not constitute a comprehensive overview of all the views of the thousands of participants and contributors to the discussions; simply interesting variants we noticed during the discussions).

A large number of participants at recent conferences have asserted that there is a common factor underlying the degradation of the environment, increasing poverty and urbanization: the value system, set of ideas or ideology which dominates the present global economic and social structure. Many argue in favour of a new value system as an important means to bring about change. Some specifically advocate ecofeminism⁽¹⁹⁾ or adaptations of native people's paradigms of human relations to earth and environment.

Others argue that the value system is not the operative factor and that it is the powerful economic interests controlling international and national decision-making which currently determine the environmental devastation of much of the world's natural resources (especially in the South) and the impoverishment of much of the world's population (especially in the South). They argue that it is only when these interests are forced to make a trade-off with other factors (such as the biosphere or their own long-term market interests in the South) that change will occur.

Many participants versed in liberal economics, while convinced that development economics have failed, argue that the ideal of development based on growth in industrial production and employment is not inherently wrong, but carries with it a set of insufficiently examined assumptions about how productivity may best be achieved and what productivity is. Among the assumptions that need to change are that nature is a free good, that domestic labour is a free good, and that the production of subsistence may be taken as a given. It is argued that, at best, economists assume that the means of subsistence are most efficiently produced by industrial enterprises and commercial farms. There seems to be plenty of evidence, especially from poor Third World countries, that already refutes this assumption.⁽²⁰⁾

21. Environment Liaison Centre International (1992), *Agenda Ya Wananchi* (Citizen's Agenda), prepared by the "Roots of the Future" Global NGO Conference in preparation for the Earth Summit, Paris, 17-20 December 1991, Nairobi.

22. Lee-Smith, Diana (1978), *Human Settlements and Ecosystems*, a draft policy paper presented to UNEP, Nairobi. This articulates the relationship between ecosystems and settlements based on natural and social science theory and advocates an interventionist position to plan settlements as ecosystems, based on community environmental management at local level.

Planners themselves came up with strategic solutions (as befits their discipline). At the Human Settlements workshops in the "Roots of the Future" NGO forum, it was proposed that the ecosystem be adopted as a basic socio-political unit, thereby facilitating participatory planning by local people of their resource system.⁽²¹⁾ The same idea was developed in the 1970s by one of the authors of this paper.⁽²²⁾ Other participants at the Human Settlements workshop are active in the "bioregional" movement of environmental management practice.

VI. THE NEED FOR A SUBSISTENCE PARADIGM

WE AGREE BROADLY with all the four positions outlined above. A new framework of ideas is needed, within which concepts and theories can take on more meaningful order. However, societal change is only likely to come about through action by those under pressure from social, economic and environmental forces, and not from changes in ideas. However, it is of critical importance to develop the sets of values and ideas which go with the necessary societal changes, not least because they can be used by social movements to develop their strategies. A new paradigm is needed, or a revised natural philosophy, which will facilitate thinking about development, economics and related topics more accurately. In our view, subsistence, the management of resources to sustain life, must be the basis of that paradigm.

The essential elements of the value system needed are contained in the natural philosophies of a number of human cultures. They are based on understanding and valuing all life, including human life. They are also based on an understanding that the earth itself is something to be valued. (Some portray the earth - the planetary ecosystem - as a living thing.) What we understand by development is the achievement of human sustenance and a qualitative existence within that web of life. This can only be achieved through a better understanding and accurate valuing of the web of life. We also find it useful that an important part of these natural philosophies is the role human beings play in making choices for the good or ill of the whole.

The new paradigm must encompass economics, whose theories need to explain the values of ecosystems, of all human labour, including that of women, and human life. This economics would therefore contain a different interpretation of subsistence from the one currently used in the social sciences. The concept of production must incorporate not only "reproduction" or the production of human subsistence, but also the production of the global ecosystem.

From our experience in the day-to-day practice of human settlements management, it is evident that the use of the ecosystem as a socio-political unit to facilitate participatory planning seems to be not only theoretically sound, but becoming daily more urgent to put into practice to avoid further environmental degradation.

Changes in economic thinking and planning practice are, however, more likely to result from, than to bring about, societal change. Those who currently hold political and economic power will only change when circumstances force them to do so. Some of the circumstances are environmental crises. But others are brought about by conscious action of groups previously lacking power. We believe that women have a part to play here, because of their present role in the production of subsistence. These ideas are developed in the next and last sections of the paper.

VII. THE PERSPECTIVE OF PRACTICE

THIS PAPER EMERGED from our work with Habitat International Coalition, especially the Women and Shelter Network - some notes about these are included at the end of the paper. The presentation of the Women and Shelter Network at the Paris NGO meeting explained how the strategies being developed through the network, and the strategy of networking itself, are evolving in response to the daily life situations that women experience. At present, network members find that much appears to be gained by mutual support and the sharing of information among groups of women who are trying to improve their shelter conditions. Exchange visits between such groups of women are proving to be a priority.

Lobbying against evictions is also emerging as an activity as members of Habitat International Coalition and the Women and Shelter network articulate the need for the network to act as a pressure group for change on behalf of its constituent organizations. Advocacy for the right to land and shelter, and for changes in some of the laws which prevent women carrying out their routine work and family responsibilities, is another priority. For example, changes are needed in zoning laws that prohibit women from undertaking income-earning activities in residential areas. Laws constraining subsistence activities in urban areas also need to be changed. The activities of women traders in the informal sector need support, so that their trade is planned for and helped instead of being harassed by law enforcement agencies.

But most importantly, in becoming aware of their situation, women are starting to realize that they have to take action to change it for the better. This new awareness will create the demand by women for more skills, to enable them to participate in decision-making and societal change.

VIII. WOMEN'S ROLE IN SOCIETAL CHANGE

IT BECAME CLEAR to us as we discussed these issues with other women's networks, that the shelter problems women are facing are not separate from the environmental problems they encounter. For the women it is the same thing - the daily struggle for the survival of the family. Women manage everyone's everyday needs. When the land or the shelter on which they rely is taken away from them by force (as is increasingly the case), by environmental degradation or by urban clean-up campaigns, women have to work out what to do next. To quote the words of one of the women leaders from Crossroads in South Africa after many communities had been dumped there, "...women from all the areas sat down to discuss the issue of how we are going to live here."

The careful management of resources to produce subsistence for their families is what links most women. Increasingly, they have to achieve this in complicated, changing and often hostile environments. This is the reason why women are emerging as the leaders in residential struggles, which include struggles for services, against evictions, and for the collective provision of subsistence in community organizations.⁽²³⁾ Some, like the women of Crossroads, organize resistance to removals. The Crossroads women also organize creches, schools and health facilities, as do women everywhere.⁽²⁴⁾ Others, like

23. Lee-Smith, Diana and Ann Schlyter (1991), "Women, environment and urbanization", editorial for *Environment and Urbanization* Vol.3, No.2, October, pages 3-5. The concept of women's crucial role in residential struggles is also taken from Moser, Caroline (1987), "Mobilization is women's work: struggle for infrastructure in Guayaquil, Ecuador" in Moser and Peake (see reference 6).

24. A summary of Crossroads women's activities is given briefly in a box on page 84 of *Environment and Urbanization* Vol.3, No.2, October 1991 and, at greater length, with analysis, in Cole, Josette (1987), *Crossroads: the politics of reform and repression 1976-1986*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. Examples from Asia are given in Murphy, Denis (1990), *A Decent Place to Live*, ACHR Bangkok and Claretian Publications, Manila.

25. Based on the analysis presented in the last issue of *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol.3, No.2, where cases of both rural and urban women's struggles are described. The articles by Rao and Sarin (see reference 13) deal with cases of rural subsistence focused on water and fuel respectively. Also, Barrig, Maruja, "Women and development in Peru: old models, new actors" pages 66-70 and Thorbek, Suzanne, "Gender in two slum cultures" pages 71-81 in the same volume analyze how and why urban community political struggles need to focus on women's concerns for daily survival.

26. The file of case studies is available from Waafas Ofusu Aamah, Global Assembly Project Director, 1331 H Street NW Suite 903, Washington DC 20005, USA, as is the final report of the meeting which does not contain the case studies.

27. Copies of the *Women's Action Agenda 21* (see reference 17) are available from Bella Abzug, IPAC, WEDO, 845 Third Avenue, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10022, USA.

the women in Latin American cities, organize popular movements not only to provide food and manage the urban environment, but to conscientize their communities about women's priorities and how they must be met.

We envisage that the struggles of women, which focus on the need for subsistence and are located in the rural and urban areas where they live, are going to become increasingly important as the environmental crisis and the accompanying economic recession deepens. These have been called residential struggles, but we believe it would be more accurate to call them subsistence struggles.⁽²⁵⁾

IX. CONCLUSION: PRACTISING GLOBAL SUSTAINMENT

THE GLOBAL ASSEMBLY on Women and the Environment which met in Miami (USA) in November 1991 brought together over 200 stories of women's grass roots action on environmental management. The stories ranged from soil and water conservation in Africa, Asia and Latin America, to toxic waste lobbying and technological innovations in forestry and farming in all regions.⁽²⁶⁾ Participants in the World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet had plenty of evidence on which to build their Women's Action Agenda 21. The stories and testimonies delivered at this latter meeting also provided plenty of evidence for building concepts and theories of women's role in global environmental management.⁽²⁷⁾

As noted at the beginning of this paper, women in ecosystems and women in urban neighbourhoods manage their environments to turn them into useful, and as far as they are able, good quality human sustenance. It would seem to be a useful paradigm for planetary ecological management. Our position that global sustainment should be practised as women practise subsistence is not meant as a metaphor or allegory. Rather, it must be given a literal and a political interpretation. For the practice of subsistence is something which is not recognized in our development paradigms. The function of producing subsistence is relegated in our economics to a level of unimportance and is virtually disregarded by economic and development planners.

Women's activities have come to be classified in many cases as not only unimportant but often illegal. The rights of indigenous communities to practice subsistence on their traditional lands are likewise threatened. A Third World re-assessment of what is meant by the global commons will include that land which must be retained and reclaimed for everyone's right to practice subsistence. The right to survive, to subsist, is being claimed by women on behalf of their families in rural and urban poor communities world-wide, in the face of development pressures which make it increasingly impossible for them to eat, clothe and shelter themselves.

If the global environment is to be managed by human beings in a way that can sustain life, it is time that women's priorities became everyone's priorities. Furthermore, now that it is time to change global priorities, it is most likely women who are going to do it.