

DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN IN SRI LANKA

Has the Theory Helped in Practice?

SUNILI GOVINNAGE

Supervisor:

Dr Robert Imre

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Declaration

I, **Sunili U Govinnage**, declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research containing as its main content work that has not been submitted for a degree at any other tertiary institution.

SUNILI GOVINNAGE

Dated:

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*To every woman
who has somehow
found the strength
to work just that little bit harder
for her family*

Abstract

The ‘development’ of poorer countries is a significant field of academic debate and a prominent aspect of international public policy. This thesis examines the concept of development and key theories which surround the concept which provide the basis for the implementation of development processes in practice. Within the context of the theoretical debate, this study questions whether development programs which have been implemented in Sri Lanka have assisted poor and disadvantaged women in that country. While extensive debate over the best way to achieve ‘development’ continues, specific development programs examined in this study have—to a small yet still meaningful extent—assisted poor and disadvantaged women in Sri Lanka within the constraints of prevailing social and economic structures.

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Introduction

Development has long been a key issue in international politics. From colonial times to the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, the idea of lifting 'poor' countries out of poverty and apparent 'backwardness' continues to be a major concern for nation states and other stakeholders such as inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations. For over half a century, the international community has seen economic development as the means to reduce poverty in poorer countries.

Economically, poverty can be thought of as an inability to meet material needs through cash transactions; balancing consumption with income in order to maintain minimum standards of living.¹ More commonly, ideas of international poverty focus on countries where the majority of people are unable to access basic healthcare, education, housing and nutrition.²

Development studies became a prominent phenomenon in academic discourse in the post World-War II period and many different theories have influenced and guided policy makers who sought to tackle poverty. Feminist analyses of development have attempted to address the problem where women form the majority of the poor and

¹ World Bank, 'Overview – Attacking Poverty: Opportunity, Empowerment, and Security' in *World Development Report 2000/2001*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000, p 1 (available online <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPOVERTY/Resources/WDR/overview.pdf>); Aline Coudouel et al, 'Poverty Measurement and Analysis', in *The PRSP Sourcebook*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002 (available online: http://poverty2.forumone.com/files/5467_chap1.pdf); M P Todaro, *Economic Development* (7th ed), Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley, 2000, p 732.

² UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003 – Millennium Development Goals: a Compact among Nations to End Human Poverty*, New York: Oxford University Press for the UNDP, 2003, p 16.

very poor because they typically earn lower wages and have more limited access to development resources and opportunities.³ This thesis focuses on how the concept of development is related to women in Sri Lanka and specifically how Sri Lankan women are affected by poverty and the processes which have been implemented to promote development and bring these women out of poverty. This study aims to understand how the field of mainstream development studies has been applied in practice to assist women in Sri Lanka and whether alternative approaches have been more successful.

This thesis will be divided into four chapters. The first chapter will examine the field of development studies in detail, discussing the nature of the concept of development as well as theories of development. There are two types of theories which will be discussed: orthodox theories of economic growth and alternative approaches to development which arose in response to the supposed failings of the orthodox theories. The second chapter will examine these concepts, theories and practices through feminist paradigms and will highlight the need for women to balance their reproductive and productive roles in the process of achieving ‘meaningful development’⁴ The third chapter will apply these concepts and theories to Sri Lanka’s development experiences on a macro level and will also examine grassroots level projects through the discussion of three NGOs and their approaches to development.

³ Noeleen Heyzer, ‘Gender, Economic Growth and Poverty’, *Development*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1992, pp 50-53, p 51.

⁴ UNIFEM, *United Nations Development Fund for Women: Development Co-operation with Women: The Experience and Future Directions of the Fund*, New York: United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, 1985, p 159.

The final chapter will examine if and how these development approaches have helped women in Sri Lanka who are living in poverty.

Research and Methodology

This thesis adopts a theoretical approach focusing on the question of whether development programs which have been implemented in Sri Lanka have assisted poor and disadvantaged women. In order to do so, this research firstly identifies and analyses literature on development theories which support development policy and processes. Secondly there is an examination of development theory and practice in the context of feminist critiques. A summary of key literature in these fields of study provides a basis for the examination of the hypothesis and research question posed in this thesis. Finally, there is an examination of the research literature in the context of secondary sources on Sri Lanka's development experience and data collected during a field visit to Sri Lanka from 17 June 2005 to 3 July 2005. The data collected is in the form of interviews and associated interview notes. The interviews were limited to those who were attached to the three NGOs focused on in this thesis. The interviews were held using both structured and unstructured formats.

As this thesis is focussed on the application of development theories and processes and their effectiveness, no statistical models have been utilised to validate the data. The interviews are of a qualitative rather than a quantitative nature. This thesis also utilises pre-existing research, including the reports of the United Nations, the World

Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and annual reports of the NGOs examined as secondary sources to assist in understanding the application of development theories.

There were various limits to the methodology employed in this research. Due to the socio-political and security situation in Sri Lanka at the time of the field research trip it was not possible to visit grassroots development projects in Sri Lanka in order to evaluate the effectiveness of projects in putting theory into practice as had been originally envisaged. This study does not evaluate the effectiveness of grassroots development projects has experienced by the beneficiaries of these programs. The focus of this research is whether development practices in Sri Lanka have been useful in the context of theoretical debate on the merit of these approaches. Therefore this thesis relies on analysis of pre-existing literature as well as interviews with people directly involved with development processes on the ground in Sri Lanka in order to draw conclusions. The main limitation was not being able to validate the conclusions through direct interviews of beneficiaries of development projects.

The conclusion to this study highlight the dilemma which exists following over five decades debate about ‘development’ and argues that while the process is far from perfect, it is firmly entrenched as part of international relations. While the theories and practices are not perfect, the development programs examined in this study have assisted poor and disadvantaged women in Sri Lanka within the context of prevailing social and economic structures. Until a complete solution to the problem of poverty can be found, it is important to work with the current structures and processes as even

the smallest improvements to the lives of people living in poverty is better than nothing at all.

Chapter One: Understanding Development

1.0 Introduction

The concept of development has spawned a great deal of academic writing as well as public policy activities which seek to make the notions it espouses into realities ‘on the ground’. Development is now a fundamental political concept; it is the object of many governments and bureaucracies. The United Nations has a specific agency which focuses on it,⁵ many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) exist to achieve it, wealthy nations take note of it in their international dealings, universities teach courses on it and poorer nations are seemingly unable to survive without it.⁶

While ‘development’ has become a central and commonly used term within international political discourse, it is also an amorphous one which is difficult to describe and define. As I will be examining the impact of this idea—and the various theories which surround it—upon development practices in Sri Lanka in Chapter Three, it is important to discuss the concept of development in order to come to any conclusions about it. This chapter will take the form of a literature review and will examine the concept of development through a theoretical framework. In the first section, I will look at the notion of development in general by exploring the central

⁵ United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

⁶ See, Thomas W Dichter, *Despite Good Intentions: why development assistance to the Third World has failed*, Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003, p 60; David Hulme and Mark Turner, *Sociology and Development: theories, policies and practices*, New York: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1990, p3.

concept as well as some of its relevant surrounding terminology. This section will highlight that all conceptions of ‘development’ are in relative terms. The second section will examine the mainstream theories of development: the liberal orthodox approach, the modernisation theory and the orthodox Marxist approach. The third section will examine critiques of these mainstream approaches by examining dependency theory, participatory development theory and post-development theory as alternative theoretical approaches to development.

1.1 Defining Development

Development can be seen as a post-World War Two construct. Several key texts note that the driving factor behind the modern evolution of ‘development’ was the era of post-war reconstruction, which included the establishment of the World Bank following the Bretton Woods conference in 1944, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan in 1947.⁷ United States President Truman’s inaugural address on 20 January 1949 has been referred to as the birth of the development era and the post-war development industry as we now know it:

We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.⁸

⁷ Gustavo Esteva, ‘Development’ in W Such (ed), *The Development Dictionary*, London: Zed Books, 1995, pp 6-25, p 7; Maggie Black, *The No-Nonsense Guide to International Development*, Oxford: New Internationalist Publications and Verso, 2002, p 15.

⁸ Quoted in Esteva, p 6.

The ideas in that brief passage spawned the post-war development industry. The reconstruction period, which turned into an expansion of ideological influence through assistance to newly independent nations during the Cold War⁹ and the 1960s ‘Decade of Development’ firmly entrenched the fervour of Truman’s vision.

1.1.1 Relativism and Comparisons

An attempt to define the concept of ‘development’ is a difficult task because

[d]evelopment occupies the centre of an incredibly powerful semantic constellation. There is nothing in modern mentality comparable to it as a force guiding thought and behaviour. At the same time, very few words are as feeble, as fragile, and as incapable of giving substance and meaning to thought and behaviour as this one.¹⁰

It is important to note that any discussion of ‘development’ is relative in its terms and contexts. For the simplest definition, one could say that development in any sense is a progression from one state or form to a higher state or form. The notion of improving and advancing from one condition to another indicates that the first condition was of a lower order as compared to the final condition, which is to be desired as a goal or an achievement. As the dominant paradigm of ‘development’ suggests that development must occur as a means ‘to escape from the undignified condition of underdevelopment’, there must first be a perception of the initial state being something lesser.¹¹

⁹ See for example Nalini Visavanthan, ‘General Introduction’ in Nalini Visavanthan et al (eds), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997, pp 1-6, p 1.

¹⁰ Esteva, p 8.

¹¹ Esteva, p 7.

An examination of the terminology used in international development studies clearly demonstrates this sense of relativity. Maggie Black, in *The No-Nonsense Guide to International Development*, writes that development is ‘the process by which “backward” countries would “catch up” with the industrialized world – courtesy of its assistance.’¹² Countries which are the focus of academic writing and the industry of development are often described as ‘non-industrialized’,¹³ ‘less developed’ or ‘underdeveloped’ (and in some older analyses, ‘backward’ or ‘primitive’¹⁴). Furthermore, the inherent aims of development programs are to improve and advance the social and economic situations of that nation so as to be on par with nations which are considered more ‘developed’. This understanding was clearly expounded in Truman’s 1949 description of the ideals of ‘international development’.

The language of development highlights a series of relationships between nations who are rich or poor, advanced or backward, developed or developing. The concept of ‘development’ is intrinsically one of relativism because ‘any consideration of development rests on the making of comparisons’ as outlined by Goldsworthy:

This, by one prevalent view of development, the extraordinary economic, technological and organisational achievements of a few western societies over the last two centuries have made them the ‘most’ developed societies on the world. Other societies are described as ‘less’ developed in varying degrees, not because of some intrinsic non-viability of their social systems and cultures but because the western achievement occurred and thereby set up a standard of comparison.¹⁵

¹² Black, p 10.

¹³ Jacob Viner, ‘The Economics of Development’ in A.N. Agarwala and S.P. Singh (eds), *The Economics of Underdevelopment*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1963, p 13.

¹⁴ The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines a ‘developing country’ as a ‘poor or primitive country that is developing better economic and social conditions.’

¹⁵ David Goldsworthy, *Analysing Theories of Development*, Melbourne: Centre of South East Asian Studies, Monash University, 1977, p 2.

This inherent paradigm of comparison is further presented by the historic labelling and grouping of countries on a scale of relative development. In the Cold War era, poorer nations were labelled as ‘Third World’ countries which were outside the First World of capitalist states and the Second World of Soviet states; later, the terms ‘developed/developing’ and ‘industrialized/non-industrialised’ were used synonymously.¹⁶ Recent discussion has been in more ‘politically correct’ and less derogatory terms of ‘Global North/Global South’. Black writes that along with the ‘rich/poor’ scale, these ‘axis descriptors ...are crude and value-laden.’¹⁷ Shiva Naipaul argues that:

Of all the relationships there are, none is more problematic or contentious than that between the rich and poor, the developed and the underdeveloped ... the ‘North’ and the ‘South’... The Third World is a form of bloodless universality that robs individuals and societies of their particularity.¹⁸

There are negative connotations in using a single term (whether it be ‘Third World’, ‘developing countries’ or ‘Global South’) to categorise ‘a vast array of peoples with different cultures, beliefs and values’ simply on the basis that they are ‘a group of mostly post-colonial states with relatively low per capita incomes.’¹⁹ An observation from 1977 noted that while the numerous countries which make up the so-called ‘Third World’ are vastly varied, they all share the common features of ‘economic backwardness and dependence upon scientific, technical and industrial centres in

¹⁶ Viner, p 12.

¹⁷ Black, p 15.

¹⁸ Shiva Naipaul, *An Unfinished Journey*, London: Abacus, Sphere Books Ltd, 1991, pp 31-38.

¹⁹ Caroline Thomas and Peter Wilkin, ‘Still waiting after all these years: the Third World on the periphery of International Relations’ *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2004, pp 241-258, p 242.

North America, Western Europe and Japan.²⁰ Clearly, when making comparisons the field of development studies establishes and then relies upon the idea that one particular type of political and economic system is the best and that anything else is necessarily inferior. This relativism is a source of some of the problems of the theories discussed below.

1.1.2 Goals and Indicators

Development is teleological.²¹ It is a goal-orientated concept because in resting upon the notion of progression from one state to a higher order, it ‘implicitly or explicitly it relates to an objective: that of developed-ness.’²² However, development may not necessarily refer to the ultimate achievement of a particular state-of-being and may simply refer to the process of moving towards that state-of-being.²³ Regardless of this ambiguity, the concept of ‘development’ hinges upon the attainment of some results, which can be described in terms of ‘progress’ or ‘growth’ or some other measure of change for the better.²⁴ From the latter half of the twentieth century to today, ideas of how development should be achieved have changed. Furthermore, the means of measuring this achievement and even the goals themselves have slowly evolved. These concepts will be further elaborated in the discussion of specific theories of development below, but a simple overview will be presented first.

²⁰ Mai Volkov, ‘Third World Countries: Problems of Economic Development and Ways of Solving Them’, *International Development Review*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1977, pp 17-20, p17.

²¹ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, ‘Dilemmas of Development Discourse: The Crisis of Developmentalism and the Comparative Method’, *Development and Change*, vol. 22, 1991, pp 5-29, p 15.

²² Goldsworthy, p 2.

²³ Goldsworthy, p 2.

²⁴ See Esteva, p 10.

During the early stages of the development industry in the 1950s and 1960s, the common understanding of development studies was that ‘in order to solve social problems, such as unemployment, and achieve respectable status as modern nations, poor countries needed “development,” which could be measured by [gross national product].’²⁵ This simple numerical measure was seen as a convenient and comprehensive way to quantify and assess the progress of development programs. Professor Dudley Seers, a prominent commentator on development studies in the 1960s and 1970s, noted that while development should not be confused with economic growth, the confusion is understandable:

We can after all fall back on the supposition that increases in national income, if they are faster than population growth, sooner or later lead to the solution of social and political problems.²⁶

Aside from monetary measures, early ideas about ‘development’ also included goals related to duplicating the advances and luxuries already enjoyed by developed nations. As President Truman proclaimed in 1949, making these benefits available to poorer countries was the purpose of development programs. The idea of replicating ‘Western achievement’ was a development model which had a great deal of influence on development policy.²⁷

However, it soon became evident that the focus on economic growth in national income and the replication of economic, social and political orders found in Western

²⁵ Dudley Seers, ‘The New Meaning of Development’ *International Development Review*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1977, pp 2-7, p 2.

²⁶ Dudley Seers, ‘The Meaning of Development’, *International Development Review*, vol. 11 (Dec 1969), pp 2-6, p 2.

²⁷ Goldsworthy, p 3.

industrial nations were not producing the desired results.²⁸ Figures of national income, measures specifically designed for industrialized and developed countries, turned out to be inappropriate for gauging the success of development programs in the Third World.²⁹ While many developing countries achieved targets for economic growth in terms of percentage increases in GNP, appalling social conditions such as poverty and low levels of education remained at best unchanged, and if not increased.³⁰ In his seminal article ‘The Meaning of Development’, Seers notes that ‘economic growth may not merely fail to solve social problems and political difficulties; certain types of growth can actually cause them.’³¹ Less than a decade after that original article was published, Seers observes that despite two decades of ‘development’, the disparity in the per capita incomes of rich and poor countries was widening along with inequality of income distribution and power within developing countries.³² As opposed to simply focusing on monetary balance-sheets, Seers suggests that development needs to be more focused on welfare goals such as lowering poverty, unemployment and inequality.³³

One can argue that development’ crossed the gap from being purely economic concept to one which embraced a broader social purpose in 1973 when, as then President of the World Bank, Robert McNamara persuaded the organization to reassess the direction of its policies to focus on the poorest people in developing

²⁸ Hulme and Turner, p4

²⁹ Seers, ‘The Meaning of Development’, p 6.

³⁰ Todaro, p 14.

³¹ Seers, ‘The Meaning of Development’, p 2.

³² Seers, ‘The New Meaning of Development’, p 3; see also Dichter, p 62.

³³ Seers, ‘The Meaning of Development’, p 3.

countries.³⁴ While there is a connection where economic growth can provide a means to achieve human development, it has been accepted that ‘human outcomes do not depend on economic growth and levels of national income alone.’³⁵ Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen argues that development is a means to reduce the deprivation created by poverty³⁶ and expand people’s choices and freedom through improving social and economic factors including political and civil rights.³⁷

The United Nations currently assesses the progress of ‘development’ by looking at data referred to as the Human Development Index (HDI). HDI measures three aspects of the human development concept: life expectancy, education and income. These measures have been supplemented with the Human Poverty Index (HPI), the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).³⁸ While it is highly arbitrary to use a set of numbers to categorise countries as ‘developed’ or ‘developing’, this is now accepted practice. However, the UNDP recognises that measurements such as the Human Development Index are far from comprehensive.³⁹

In 2000, the UN General Assembly approved a set of targets aimed at reducing global poverty and inequality within 15 years. All UN Member States pledged to meet the Millennium Development Goals which are as follows:

³⁴ Black, p 71.

³⁵ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004 – Cultural Liberty in Today’s Diverse World*, New York: Oxford University Press for the UNDP, 2004, p 127.

³⁶ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp 87ff.

³⁷ Sen, p 3.

³⁸ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003*, p 60.

³⁹ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 128.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

Along with these eight goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators were prepared as a road-map for achieving the targets of the Millennium Development Project.⁴⁰ It is interesting to see how goals and indicators for measuring the progress of development have changed as the ideas and theories about development have evolved. As the complexity of 'development' became more evident, theorists and policymakers have adapted their processes and programs to their new goals.

Despite being operational for over half a century, the development industry has failed to achieve desired results in many countries. In the 2003 *Human Development Report*, the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) observed that economic differentiation and inequality was rising and that the accepted indicators for 'development' were also worsening in the 1990s.⁴¹ These worsening indicators were aligned with staggering debt, creating circumstances of poverty in the

⁴⁰ A full list of the targets and indicators for the Millennium Development Goals is available online: http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp (accessed 12 May 2005).

⁴¹ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003*, pp 40-41.

underdeveloped world which showed no signs of alleviating.⁴² There are many explanations for the failure of real results in the crusade of development to achieve the goals of improving underdeveloped countries as expounded by President Truman in 1949.

1.2 Theories of Development

The main reason put forward for the failure of development to achieve its goals is centred on the shortcomings of development theory and resulting policy thrusts to accurately assess the long term issues.⁴³ This section will examine three orthodox theories of development which were used during the latter half of the twentieth century to support development policies and programs.

1.2.1 Orthodox Liberal Approach

The dominant understanding of the term 'development' often relates to the economic phenomenon of growth in free-market economies. This understanding, along with the ideas of the modernisation theory discussed below, has influenced development policy in the immediate post-war period. This theory has once again come into prominence within the last decade as neo-liberal thinking in economics, trade and finance continues to assert its dominance over the international system. Within the

⁴² See Black, p 24.

⁴³ K R Hope, *Development in the Third World: from policy failure to policy reform*, London: M E Sharpe, 1996, p3.

orthodox liberal paradigm of development, economic growth is viewed as necessary for combating poverty. In terms of development, countries with lower national incomes per capita are considered to be ‘less developed’, as demonstrated by the UNDP’s HDI and World Bank indicators, which divide countries into groups based on income levels.⁴⁴

In strict economic terms, development can be understood as the capacity of a state’s economy to generate and sustain growth, as measured by gross national product (GNP⁴⁵). Within this paradigm it is understood that less-developed countries are poor because their economies fail to produce enough commodities, services, value or income.⁴⁶ With this understanding, the ‘planned alternation of the structure of production and employment,’ often in the form of rapid industrialisation,⁴⁷ is seen as the means to facilitate the process and goal of ‘economic development’. In the post-war years, indicators of successful ‘development’ were increasing GNP, increasing levels of investment and consumption, and a rising standard of living.⁴⁸ The rationale behind promoting economic growth as a vehicle for development was that capital accumulation and an increased GNP would result in a ‘trickle down’ of benefits to the country’s population. A healthy economy would support the population through the

⁴⁴ Todaro, p 30.

⁴⁵ The World Bank now uses the term ‘Gross National Income (GNI)’: see World Bank, *Change in Terminology*, World Bank, Washington, DC, viewed 13 May 2005, <http://www.worldbank.org/data/changinterm.html>.

⁴⁶ David Jaffee, *Levels of Socio-Economic Development Theory*, New York: Praeger, 1990, p 103.

⁴⁷ Todaro, p 14.

⁴⁸ Hope, p3.

creation of jobs and other conditions which were necessary to support the goals of ‘development’.⁴⁹

The liberal economic paradigm of development highlights two main causes of international poverty which must be overcome in order to create a healthy economy in developing nations and reduce the symptoms of ‘underdevelopment’. These two factors are the ‘inadequate integration of less developed countries into the world economy and irrational state policies that impede the development of a well-functioning market’.⁵⁰ The orthodox liberal theory proposes domestic development can be facilitated by an integrated global economy based on trade liberalisation, specialisation and international division of labour.⁵¹ The liberal model also emphasises capital accumulation, savings and investment as a means of facilitating GNP growth. Unequal distribution of income—which is a prevalent phenomenon where liberal economic policies have been applied in practice—was accepted because rich people were able to save more, generate more investment and stimulate more growth.⁵²

However, it soon became apparent that simply using income as the driving factor for development was insufficient, principally because the orthodox liberal model was geared to Western economic systems. In particular, as discussed previously, it

⁴⁹ Todaro, p 14.

⁵⁰ Robert Gilpin, *The Political Economy of International Relations*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987, p 269.

⁵¹ Magnus Blomstrom and Bjorn Hettne, *Development Theory in Transition: the Dependency Debate and Beyond – Third World Responses*, London: Zed Books, 1984, p 15; Gilpin, p 266.

⁵² See Senyo Adjibolosoo, *Rethinking Development Theory and Policy: a human factor critique*, Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1999, p 10.

became clear that while many developing nations were achieving income growth targets, standards of living continued to be low⁵³ and the benefits of development as envisaged by President Truman were not being delivered. This is evident in the case of Sri Lanka as discussed in Chapter Three. As a result, subsequent theoretical development attempted to compensate for these failings. In the sense that structural changes were required to improve economic growth, the orthodox liberal approach to development goes hand in hand with modernisation theory.

1.2.2 Modernisation Theory

Modernisation theory marked the expansion of development studies from a narrow economic focus to a more interdisciplinary field incorporating economics with sociology and politics as a way of addressing the classic liberal economic model's failings to achieve poverty-reduction goals in a complex socio-political arena.⁵⁴

Simply aiming for economic growth was inadequate in dealing with problems such as education, health care and social equality.⁵⁵ However, economics continued to play a central role in this approach. Modernisation theory is based upon the premise articulated by Arthur Lewis that in order to secure rapid economic growth,⁵⁶ an underdeveloped country must transform its economic structure from one with 'a

⁵³ Todaro, p 14.

⁵⁴ Blomstrom and Hettne, p 19.

⁵⁵ Blomstrom and Hettne, p 19.

⁵⁶ Hulme and Turner, p 34.

heavy emphasis on traditional subsistence agriculture to a more modern, more urbanized, and more industrially diverse manufacturing and service economy.’⁵⁷

While international trade can operate as an ‘engine of growth’, modernisation theory calls for less developed countries to make structural changes in relation to reliance on subsistence agriculture, and technical education, in order to facilitate their ‘escape from economic backwardness.’⁵⁸ Within this paradigm, ‘development’ essentially entails the transformation of a ‘pre-modern’ traditional society using the technology and forms of social organisation which ‘characterise the advanced, economically prosperous, and relatively politically stable nations of the Western World.’⁵⁹ This theory presents the dichotomy of ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ which, as we have observed earlier, as a central aspect of the concept of development. The other key features of the concept of development observable in modernisation theory are the delineation of observable differences between countries on a scale of wealth and thus ‘developedness’ and its evolutionary nature.⁶⁰

The transition of a society from away from traditional economic systems is facilitated by policy initiatives aimed at ‘modernisation’.⁶¹ The central doctrine of modernisation theory comes from Walter Rostow, whose work influenced development policy in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In order to achieve the ‘self-

⁵⁷ Todaro, p 84.

⁵⁸ Gilpin, p 267.

⁵⁹ Wilbert Moore quoted in Hulme and Turner, pp 34-35.

⁶⁰ Blomstrom and Hettne, p 20.

⁶¹ Hulme and Turner, p 35.

sustaining economic growth' so successfully achieved in modern Western societies, Rostow's theory proposed that undeveloped societies had to encourage the forces of supply and demand, investment, infrastructure, technology and mass-consumption in order to become a modern industrial society.⁶² Hulme and Turner note that for developing countries, the catalysts for these transitions to modernity are factors of 'external intrusion which shocked the traditional society into change.'⁶³ The requirement of these external factors highlights the observation that modernisation is in practice Westernisation because underdeveloped nations should imitate the successful model of the West.⁶⁴

It is interesting to note that modernisation theory has been referred to as a response to the classical liberal approach's failure to be applicable in non-Western contexts.⁶⁵ The apparent solution of Westernising non-Western societies in order for Western-style economic growth to prevail is a fairly simplistic approach and four decades later underdeveloped countries continue to lag behind. The implicit assumption of modernisation theory is that the West is inherently superior to the Third World in all social, political and economic aspects and this paradigm has been called 'a celebration of Western civilisation'.⁶⁶ In particular, Rostow saw capitalist development along the lines of European and American experiences as inevitable.⁶⁷ Ironically, modernisation theory's premise of the inevitability of capitalist growth

⁶² Jaffe, pp 109-110; Hulme and Turner, p 38; Ozay Mehmet, *Westernizing the Third World: the Eurocentricity of Economic Development Theories*, London: Routledge, 1995, p 68.

⁶³ Hulme and Turner, p 38.

⁶⁴ Blomstrom and Hettne, pp 21, 23.

⁶⁵ Blomstrom and Hettne, p 19.

⁶⁶ Hulme and Turner, p 35.

⁶⁷ Mehmet, p 68.

shares similarities with its ideological nemesis in that it follows classical Marxist views of development as a fundamental part of historic progression.

1.2.3 Orthodox Marxist Approach

Karl Marx prophesised that backward nations could see their own future by looking to more developed ones.⁶⁸ His views on development share similarities with other nineteenth century evolutionists and twentieth century modernisation theorists in the sense that the evolution of society was seen to pass through distinct economic stages: primitive commodity production, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and finally the utopia of communism.⁶⁹ The essence of Marx's work was that all historical changes were triggered by conflict between the forces and relations of production which results in the previous mode of production being replaced by a newer one of a high order.⁷⁰ Marx's view on the development of Western societies was that the transitions were endogenous, that is, triggered from within. However, this theory of European development did not apply in Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere out of European influence.

From the orthodox Marxist perspective, pre-capitalist societies of the underdeveloped world are seen to be historically stuck because they are 'devoid of any internal mechanism of social change' due to a lack of class conflict.⁷¹ These societies are

⁶⁸ Blomstrom and Hettne, p 10, 21.

⁶⁹ Gilpin, pp 270-271.

⁷⁰ Blomstrom and Hettne, p 9.

⁷¹ Gilpin, p 271.

unable to ‘generate the transition to capitalism internally’ as ‘the producers’ control of their own subsistence resulted in resistance to change and movement to a higher mode of production.⁷² For Marx, the conservative structure of societies in less developed countries results in the economic and social stagnation and colonialism and imperialism were a means to overcome these problems.⁷³ Marx saw the colonisation of less developed countries by those with superior modes of production as an evil necessary to meet desirable ends of progression and modernisation.⁷⁴ Introducing capitalism to less developed countries would allow the internal mechanisms for societal change to exist, thus driving these economies through the necessary stages to communism. In this sense, the classical Marxist approach to development in the non-developed world is very similar to modernisation theory in its views on historical progression, in its Eurocentricity and its legitimisation of colonialism and Westernization.

1.3 Critiques of Orthodox Development Theory

This section will provide an overview of alternative approaches to development theory and policy that purport to deal with the failings of traditional theories of development. These critiques highlight the nature of ‘developmentalism’ as a ‘universalist, ahistorical, teleological and ethnocentric ... discourse of power’,⁷⁵ which

⁷² Hulme and Turner, p 44.

⁷³ Gilpin, p 271.

⁷⁴ Hulme and Turner, p 44.

⁷⁵ Pieterse, ‘Dilemmas of Development Discourse’, p 5.

has been unsuccessful in providing relief for people in less-developed countries.

‘Alternative development’ has generally been associated with NGOs and development agencies as opposed to economic theorists. These ideas attempt to find different ways of approaching the agents, methods, objectives and values of development.⁷⁶ This section will examine underdevelopment theory from a structuralist and dependency position, participatory development process and post-development theory.

1.3.1 Underdevelopment: Structuralism and Dependency Theory

By the 1970s it was clear that orthodox liberal, modernisation and Marxist theories were failing to achieve ‘development’ and that many less-developed countries remained subordinate to more developed countries in the international system.⁷⁷

Dependency theorists argue that the operation of the international economy systematically causes underdevelopment because the nature of the system negatively affects poorer countries.⁷⁸ According to this theory, the capitalist world economy creates underdevelopment because the international system can be thought of as a developed core and a less-developed periphery linked through trade and investment.⁷⁹

As Brazilian scholar Theotonio Dos Santos proposed, the relationship between the core and the periphery creates an environment of dependence where the already

⁷⁶ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, ‘My Paradigm or Yours? Alternative Development, Post-Development, Reflexive Development’, *Development and Change*, vol. 29, 1998, pp 343-373, p 346.

⁷⁷ Hulme and Turner, p 46.

⁷⁸ Gilpin, p 273.

⁷⁹ See André Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile and Brazil*, Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1971; Hulme and Turner, p 47.

developed core achieve self-sustaining growth while the periphery can only grow as a secondary consequence of core growth.⁸⁰

Dependency theory views the nature of the liberal capitalist world economy as a trade relationship between the two sectors that works to the advantage of the centre and to the disadvantage of the periphery.⁸¹ The underdeveloped periphery seeks its income from commodity exports while having to import manufactured goods from the developed core⁸² and the periphery suffers from economic instability as a result of fluctuating prices.⁸³ Due to ‘the nature of technical advance, cyclical price movements, and differences in demand for industrial goods and primary products’ the terms of trade deteriorate and less developed countries receive lower prices for the commodity exports relative to manufactured imports.⁸⁴ This process creates a cycle of balance-of-payments deficits, debt and dependence,⁸⁵ which causes underdevelopment,⁸⁶ particularly when governments are unable to spend on social welfare policies which benefit those in poverty. Where industrialisation does take place in the underdeveloped periphery, the power and profits are generally returned to the core through multinational corporations.⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Richard Peet, *Global Capitalism: Theories of Societal Development*, NY, London: Routledge, 1991, p 45.

⁸¹ Gilpin, p 276.

⁸² Frank, p 193.

⁸³ Gilpin, p 285.

⁸⁴ Gilpin, p 275.

⁸⁵ Jaffe, p 153.

⁸⁶ Gilpin, p 282.

⁸⁷ Peet, p 46.

André Gunder Frank, considered to be one of the key contributors to the Latin American dependency school, argues that because ‘development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin’,⁸⁸ capitalist development generates underdevelopment.⁸⁹ Frank and other dependency theorists also criticise modernisation theory’s premise that underdevelopment is a result of the operation of the rural/industrial dichotomy of developing economies, arguing that international capitalism converted the systems of less-developed economies ‘into sources of its own further development’.⁹⁰ While the liberal economic paradigm views underdevelopment as a condition poor countries find themselves in as a result of falling behind more advanced countries, dependency theory claims that underdevelopment is a process in which less-developed countries are actually pushed behind by ‘the nature of the relationship [particularly in trade] between developed and underdeveloped nations.’⁹¹

There was some differentiation amongst the ‘underdevelopment’ theorists on the methods which should be used to overcome the barriers of the underdevelopment. Structural theorists, including Singer and Prebisch argue that national industrialization policies should be implemented in order to decrease dependence on imports from the developed core and redress the problems balance-of-payments

⁸⁸ Quoted in Blomstrom and Hettne, p 66.

⁸⁹ Frank, p 22.

⁹⁰ See Peet, p 46.

⁹¹ Hulme and Turner, p 48.

deficits.⁹² However, it became clear that the traditional social and economic conditions in less-developed countries remained unchanged despite the import-substitution industrialisation strategies espoused by structuralists. Under these policies there was a continued misdistribution of income, a lack of adequate domestic demand to sustain industrialisation and an increasing reliance on multinational corporations that exploited import-substitution policies.⁹³

The later school of neo-Marxist dependency theorists argue that underdevelopment is created by the exploitative operation of the world capitalist economy, which is viewed as an extension of colonial relationships.⁹⁴ This paradigm's solution to underdevelopment is breaking the links between the international capitalist system and the domestic economy. This requires political revolution to overthrow the elite which allows continued exploitation and to introduce a leadership promising to strive for autonomous development.⁹⁵ Gilpin writes that within the dependency paradigm, the conceptions of development and underdevelopment

are as much political and social concepts as they are economic; these theorists desire not merely the economic growth of the economy, but also the transformation and development of the society in a particular social and political direction.⁹⁶

Despite criticism of some of the methodologies and premises of dependency theory,⁹⁷ commentators agree that the paradigm is valid in its claim that development through international capitalism has neglected many countries in the Global South.⁹⁸

⁹² Raul Prebisch, *Change and Development, Latin America's Great Task: report submitted to the Inter-American Development Bank*, Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 1970, p 98; Gilpin, p 277.

⁹³ Gilpin, p 283.

⁹⁴ Frank, pp 44-47.

⁹⁵ Gilpin, p 287.

⁹⁶ Gilpin, p 287.

1.3.2 Participatory Development

Following an impasse in development studies and failures in policy outcomes during the 1980s, the 1990s saw an expansion in alternative approaches to development theory and practice. One approach which sought to explain and deal with the failure of fifty years of conventional development intervention⁹⁹ is participatory development. 'Participation' had been utilised in development circles since the 1960's, although the interventionist approach was still the most common until much later.¹⁰⁰ Interventionist approaches are either macroeconomic growth policies¹⁰¹ or the provision of goods and grants of money to poor people by governments or charitable organisations,¹⁰² but participatory development purports to 'enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act.'¹⁰³ Essentially, participatory development practices allow communities to have a sense of ownership and responsibility regarding their own development rather than a dependence on external providers.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁷ See Peet, pp 52-53; Gilpin, p 288.

⁹⁸ Gilpin, p 289.

⁹⁹ Majid Rahnema, 'Participation' in W Such (ed), *The Development Dictionary*, London: Zed Books, 1995, pp 116-131, p 120.

¹⁰⁰ UNDP, *Empowering People: A Guide to Participation*, UNDP, New York, viewed 4 June 2005, <http://www.undp.org/sl/Documents/Manuals/Empowering/chapter1.htm>; Rahnema, p 117.

¹⁰¹ Giles Mohan and Kristian Stoke, 'Participatory development and empowerment: the dangers of localism', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 21, no 2, 2000, pp 247-268, p 253.

¹⁰² Kamala Peris, *Weaving a Future Together: Women and Participatory Development*, Utrecht, The Netherlands: International Books, 1997, p 62.

¹⁰³ Robert Chambers, 'The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal', *World Development*, vol. 22, no. 7, 1994, pp 953-969, p 953.

¹⁰⁴ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 60.

Participatory development became very influential in development practice and was accepted and adopted by NGOs, national and international development agencies¹⁰⁵ and even the World Bank,¹⁰⁶ who endorse the ‘view that poor people are not “objects” of development’ but must be the drivers of their own destiny.¹⁰⁷

Participatory development arose out of a shift in development rhetoric which presented ‘reversals from top-down to bottom-up, from centralized standardization to local diversity, and from blueprint to learning process.’¹⁰⁸ In essence, participatory development is a process which responds to the trend where mainly Western-dominated development organisations impose knowledge, plans and processes on local communities.¹⁰⁹

This approach prevents ‘development from degenerating into a bureaucratic, top-down and dependency creating institution’¹¹⁰ and moves away from the process where development agencies simply provide supplies and services to impoverished communities.¹¹¹ The idea behind participatory development is that the local community itself gathers data, analyses it and uses this information to solve local problems such as those related to natural resource management, agriculture, poverty

¹⁰⁵ For example the UNDP’s Change Agents Program; see K P G M Perera, *The Change Agents Program: A Development Strategy for the Rural Poor*, Colombo: Ministry of Plan Implementation, undated.

¹⁰⁶ World Bank, *World Bank Participation Source Book*, World Bank, Washington, DC, viewed 18 May 2005, <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/sourcebook/sba104.htm>.

¹⁰⁷ Nalini Hennayake, ‘Participatory Rural Development and the Question of Women’s Empowerment in Sri Lanka’ in Centre for Women’s Research, *Gender, Ideology and Development in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: CENWOR, 2000, pp 1-15, p 2.

¹⁰⁸ Chambers, p 953.

¹⁰⁹ Ilan Kapoor, ‘The devil’s in the theory: a critical assessment of Robert Chambers’ work on participatory development’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2002, pp 101-117, p 103.

¹¹⁰ Rahnama, p 121.

¹¹¹ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 62.

and social programs, health and food security.¹¹² External agencies are of course involved with facilitating this process by being catalysts to drive local groups to take responsibility rather than acting as social service providers.¹¹³

The literature surrounding participatory development highlights the debate of whether participation is a means or an end. As a means to achieve development, participation is a process where communities work in conjunction with outside facilitators who ‘promote participation as a means of ensuring the successful outcome of the activities undertaken.’¹¹⁴ In this sense, participation is merely a tool to improve efficiency of the development process and this devalues its intrinsic value.¹¹⁵ But where participation is viewed as an end in itself, it is a positive goal to empower people to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to take responsibility for their own development¹¹⁶ and empower them to continue the process once ‘external support becomes redundant and the transformation process continues without the physical presence of external agents, animators or mediators.’¹¹⁷

The participatory development approach has been criticised because the informality of the process can lend itself to abuse of power and corruption, and often impedes

¹¹² Chambers, pp 961-562.

¹¹³ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 64.

¹¹⁴ UNDP, *Empowering People*,
<http://www.undp.org/sl/Documents/Manuals/Empowering/chapter1.htm>.

¹¹⁵ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 71.

¹¹⁶ UNDP, *Empowering People*,
<http://www.undp.org/sl/Documents/Manuals/Empowering/chapter1.htm>.

¹¹⁷ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 100.

free end equal deliberations.¹¹⁸ Criticism has been made of the effect of power relations with the external ‘facilitators’ as well as within communities themselves.¹¹⁹ The reliance on local leaders to act as change agents is seen as a problem when the village elite, who already have power in the community, take control at the expense of the very poor.¹²⁰ There has also been criticism of this approach’s tendency to essentialize distinctions between the ‘poor’ and the ‘elite’¹²¹ and the process’s dependence on catalytic institutions such as NGOs and development agencies to drive and ‘facilitate’ change.¹²² Furthermore, it has been noted that often women are unable to take part in the process because they are already under pressure to complete domestic tasks and often lack the time to undertake extra activities¹²³ and they are alienated and intimidated by the involvement of men in the process.¹²⁴ Another key criticism is that the approach is simply a cost-cutting measure favoured by development agencies because by shifting the burden onto the poor results can be achieved more efficiently.¹²⁵

However, the participatory approach remains to be influential in development circles as a means for empowering people to drive their own development.¹²⁶ Sanderson and

¹¹⁸ Kapoor, p 106.

¹¹⁹ Kapoor, p 110.

¹²⁰ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 65.

¹²¹ Mohan and Stoke, p 253.

¹²² Kapoor, p 113.

¹²³ David Mosse, ‘Authority, gender and knowledge: theoretical reflections on the practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal’, *Development and Change*, vol. 25, 1994, pp 497-452, p 512.

¹²⁴ Eleanor Sanderson and Sara Kindon, ‘Progress in participatory development: opening up the possibility of knowledge through progressive participation’, *Progress in Development Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2004, pp 114-126, p 117.

¹²⁵ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 66; Rahnema, pp 117, 119.

¹²⁶ Trevor Parfitt, ‘The ambiguity of participation: a qualified defence of participatory development’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2004, pp 537-546.

Kindon note that participatory development satisfies the ‘need for greater inclusion of alternative and indigenous knowledges in approaches to development theory’,¹²⁷ allows for development programs to be ‘more relevant to local needs’ and results in more sustainable development processes because people are empowered to manage and maintain their development.¹²⁸ Variations of participatory development ideas have been implemented by all three Sri Lankan development NGOs in poverty alleviation strategies discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

1.3.3 Post Development

After half a century of extensive theoretical debate on ‘development’, the 1990s saw an expansion in what has been likened to a post-modernist approach to the subject.¹²⁹ The ‘post-development’ approach, which has also been referred to as ‘anti-development’ and ‘beyond development’, can be seen as a reaction to decades of impasse within mainstream development theory and policy.¹³⁰ Post-development theorists view development as ‘a monolithic enterprise, heavily controlled from the top, convinced of the superiority of its own wisdom and impervious to local knowledge’.¹³¹ This paradigm highlights the entrenchment of ethnocentric and colonial values within the discourse of development which is portrayed as

¹²⁷ Sanderson and Kindon, p 114.

¹²⁸ UNDP, *Empowering People*,
<http://www.undp.org/sl/Documents/Manuals/Empowering/chapter1.htm>.

¹²⁹ John Rapley, ‘Development studies and the post-development critique’, *Progress in Development Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2004, pp 350-354, p 350.

¹³⁰ Pieterse, ‘My Paradigm or Yours?’, p 360.

¹³¹ R D Grillo, ‘Discourses of development: the view from anthropology’, in R D Grillo & R L Stirrat (eds), *Discourses and Development: Anthropological Perspectives*, Oxford: Berg, 1997, p 20.

perpetuating hierarchies of power and difference rather than rectifying them.¹³² This paradigm views ‘development’ as a continuation of colonialism¹³³ because development discourse maintains the domination and exploitation of underdeveloped countries by developed ones.¹³⁴

In essence, post-development is a blatant rejection of the concepts of development which as emerged due to ‘a feeling that the negative consequences which have been observed to result from development are intrinsic to development, rather than being unintentional side effects of it.’¹³⁵ Post-development further argues that ‘development’ only reflects the interests of its proponents and is based on an unjustified goal which ‘rooted in something of a tautology: people seek development because it is desirable, and we know it is desirable because people seek it.’¹³⁶ Because of this reasoning, the post-development school¹³⁷ advocates alternatives *to* development as opposed to alternative forms *of* development.¹³⁸

However, the concept of post-development has been criticised for its rejection of development because despite calls for alternatives to development, most of the

¹³² Jane L Parpart ‘Post-Modernism, Gender and Development’ in Jonathan Crush, *Power of Development*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, pp 253-265, p 253.

¹³³ Knut Nustad, ‘Development: the devil we know?’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2001, pp 479-489, p 480.

¹³⁴ Arturo Escobar, ‘Discourse and power in development: Michel Foucault and the relevance of his work to the Third World’, *Alternatives*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1984/1985, pp 377-400, p 378.

¹³⁵ Sally Matthews, ‘Post-development theory and the question of alternatives’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2004, pp 373-384, p 374.

¹³⁶ Rapley, p 350.

¹³⁷ See Pieterse, ‘My Paradigm or Yours?’, p 361 for a fairly comprehensive list of proponents of this theory.

¹³⁸ Pieterse, ‘My Paradigm or Yours?’, p 362.

literature fails to discuss any specific alternatives.¹³⁹ In this regard, post-development does not offer a positive program to deal with the problems posed by development and therefore is destructive as opposed to constructive.¹⁴⁰ Defenders of post-development argue that the concept is more than just an ‘interesting critique of the development apparatus’¹⁴¹ because exposing the failures of development intervention can yield useful insights for improving practical approaches.¹⁴² Post-development theory has

shown how the restrictions imposed on the developers’ conception of their task sometimes undermine the whole intervention. This, surely, is an important contribution, even if the critique does not have a future programme.¹⁴³

Post-development theory favours social movements and radical democracy where cultural considerations were put before pure economic development and local people ‘sought to regain autonomy over livelihood decisions.’¹⁴⁴ The approach of Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka’s largest NGO,¹⁴⁵ shows similarities with post-development thought. The ethos of the organisation tries to avoid replication of Western goals and sees development as a means of pursuing ‘an alternative, simple, and sustainable lifestyle based on reducing material desires’¹⁴⁶ using Buddhist values and local knowledge.¹⁴⁷

¹³⁹ Matthews, pp 373-374.

¹⁴⁰ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, ‘After post-development’, *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2000, pp 479-489, p 188.

¹⁴¹ Nustad, p 479.

¹⁴² Nustad, p 484.

¹⁴³ Nustad, p 488.

¹⁴⁴ Mohan and Stoke, p 259.

¹⁴⁵ Refer to Chapter Three: section 3.3.2.

¹⁴⁶ George D Bond, *Buddhism at Work: Community Development Social Empowerment and the Sarvodaya Movement*, Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press Inc, 2004, p 43.

¹⁴⁷ Grillo, p 20.

1.4 Conclusion

The different permutations of development thinking and practice have essentially moved from grand models for the economic development of countries on a national level within the framework of the global economy to smaller, grassroots projects which aim to improve the livelihoods of people at a community level. None of the approaches discussed have provided perfect solutions. Even the alternative models of development practice which evolved as responses to failures in traditional development thinking have since been debated, criticised and reformulated. The existence of a post-modernist like paradigm which calls for the idea of ‘development’ to be done away with altogether highlights the frustrations this concept has created after over fifty years of discussion, debate and practice.

Development studies is a vast and complex field spanning decades of theorisation and debate which have influenced policy action on the ground. The field itself has ‘developed’ and grown in response to results (often failures) of development practices with alternative approaches being formulated to deal with the shortcomings of orthodox theories of growth and the slow ‘trickle down’ of benefits to the people these practices sought to assist.

In addition to discussion of development theory, this chapter has also examined the concept of development itself, noting its goal-oriented nature as well as the inherent relativism which is involved in the process. The concept of international development entails comparing countries and ranking them on scales of rich/poor,

developed/underdeveloped, modern/traditional and improved/inferior. The post-development school argues that the power relationships which occur in development discourse results in the domination of and exploitation of underdeveloped countries.¹⁴⁸ But despite calls for development to be abandoned however, it is as established aspect of global politics and renewed momentum from the Millennium Development Project and campaigns such as Make Poverty History only confirms its entrenchment within the international system.

Development is here to stay, at least for the foreseeable future. The following chapter will examine the theories of development through a feminist paradigm while Chapters Three and Four will apply the concepts, theories and processes discussed in this chapter in the context of Sri Lanka's development experience.

¹⁴⁸ Escobar, p 378.

Chapter Two: Development Through the Gender Lens

2.0 Introduction

Gender can be viewed as ‘a relational concept that juxtaposes femininity and masculinity’¹⁴⁹ and feminist analyses address the relationships among people as a result of ‘real or perceived social, economic, political, cultural, and sexual differences’.¹⁵⁰ In the context of development and the relationship between women and international political economy, the key issues for feminist analyses include the exploitation of women in the global capitalist system. This issue arises from the trade in women for prostitution and as domestic workers through the ‘increased commodification of women’s and girls’ nurturing, childbearing and sexual capacities – resources at the bottom of humanity’s barrel when there is nothing else to scrape.’¹⁵¹

Within the broader process and programs for development, the international community has recognised the value of supporting the advancement of women in less developed countries. On International Women’s Day 2005, the Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, declared that ‘study after study has taught us that

¹⁴⁹ Jennifer Hyndman and Malithi de Alwis, ‘Beyond Gender: Towards a Feminist Approach of Humanitarianism and Development in Sri Lanka’, *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 3/4, 2003, pp 212-226, p 212.

¹⁵⁰ Hyndman and de Alwis, p 213.

¹⁵¹ Black, p 54.

there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.’¹⁵² Milestones indicating the growth of this understanding include the United Nations’ Decade for Women in 1975-1985, the Global Women’s Conferences in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995), and the Millennium Development Goals. These steps were all crucial towards affirming the international community’s commitment to promote the empowerment of women as a key to development. The UN events are considered symbolically important because they ‘legitimized women’s concerns [about] continued inequality and growing poverty in most countries of the world.’¹⁵³ It has since been accepted that a country’s need to overcome the constraints and problems which face women, as they undertake various socio-economic roles in their communities, is ‘a critical prerequisite for meaningful development’.¹⁵⁴

The first part of this chapter will examine the orthodox theories of development examined in Chapter One from the feminist perspective. There have been significant contributions to this field which argue that mainstream development paradigms fail women in developing countries. Since the 1970s, these contributions have had a significant impact in changing and influencing development policy. Feminist development critique itself has also evolved and changed over the decades in response to the problems of developmentalism. The second part of this chapter will

¹⁵² Kofi Annan (Secretary General of the United Nations), *Message of the Secretary General*, 8 March 2005, United Nations, New York, viewed 18 May 2005, <http://www.un.org/events/women/iwd/2005/message.html>.

¹⁵³ Irene Tinker, ‘The Making of a Field: Advocates, Practitioners and Scholars’ in Nalini Visavanthan et al (eds), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997, pp 33-42, p 35.

¹⁵⁴ UNIFEM, p 159.

look specifically at feminist critiques of the alternative development approaches introduced in Chapter One which are used in practice by the Sri Lankan development NGOs examined in Chapter Three. The central issue which arises from the examination of development through the gender lens is that ‘meaningful development’ must give consideration to balancing the multiple roles and tasks women take responsibility for every day.

2.1 Feminist Development: the Theories

The three main areas of feminist development critique are the respective discourses of Women in Development, Women and Development and Gender and Development. These different feminist approaches have been the result of theoretical debates and practical results being ‘proposed, reformed and challenged’¹⁵⁵. Feminist critiques of development theory emerged in the early 1970s and the conceptual shifts in research and practice of the theoretical frameworks in this area generally coincide with the trends in general development thinking. The various schools in this field have been influenced by different underlying assumptions about the status of women in developing countries and their role in development processes.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Hyndman and de Alwis, p 214.

¹⁵⁶ Eva M Rathgeber, ‘WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in Research and Practice’, *The Journal of Developing Areas*, vol. 24, July 1990, pp 489-502, p 489.

2.1.1 Women in Development (WID)

The Women in Development school is the first, dominant and most influential feminist approach to development and it has been noted that the name given to this paradigm is widely used as the term for the field itself.¹⁵⁷ The majority of development projects for women have been influenced by the liberal-feminist WID paradigm, which has been accepted, embraced and implemented by governments, international agencies and non-governmental organisations.¹⁵⁸ This school grew in the early 1970s in response to the work of Danish economist Ester Boserup whose treatise *Women's Role in Economic Development* was the first to systematically outline 'the sexual division of labor' which occurs in developing agrarian economies and specifically discuss the effects that changes in modernizing societies have on women.¹⁵⁹ The study fills the gap in economic development literature where the impact of development on women had been largely ignored. Boserup's vision was to change policy practices to better accommodate women in the development process.¹⁶⁰

The central findings of Boserup's extensive analysis of statistical data are that: gender is a 'basic factor in the division of labour prevalent across countries and regions';¹⁶¹ colonialism and capitalism worked to subordinate women, often as a result of land reforms; women were held back in the process of industrialisation and

¹⁵⁷ Nalini Visavanthan, 'Introduction to Part 1' in Nalini Visavanthan et al (eds), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997, pp 17-32, p 17.

¹⁵⁸ Rathgeber, p 495.

¹⁵⁹ Rathgeber, p 490.

¹⁶⁰ Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, London: Earthscan Publications, 1989, p 5.

¹⁶¹ Lourdes Benería and Gita Sen, 'Accumulation, Reproduction and Women's Role in Economic Development: Boserup Revisited' in Nalini Visavanthan et al (eds), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997, pp 42-51, p 42.

urbanization;¹⁶² and that ‘women workers were marginalized in the process of economic development because their economic gains as wage workers, farmers and traders were slight compared to that of male workers.’¹⁶³ Boserup’s ‘documentation of the regressive impact of development on women’s lives and livelihoods’¹⁶⁴ shows that modernisation occurs at the cost of women’s economic independence.¹⁶⁵ Further research and analysis in the WID field highlights the contribution women make to economic development—such as the fact ‘women form the majority of the world’s food producers’¹⁶⁶—and promotes the greater emphasis on women’s interests within international development planning and practice.¹⁶⁷

As a paradigm of feminist development studies, WID accepts the assumptions of liberal orthodox modernisation theory which dominated mainstream development thinking in the early part of the last half-century.¹⁶⁸ As a liberal feminist paradigm, WID accepts that industrialization and growth would bring benefits such as improvements in living standards to less-developed countries but advocated policy changes which would better integrate women both into public society and the modernisation process.¹⁶⁹ The object of WID thinking is to promote equality in order to ‘spread the benefits of modernisation’¹⁷⁰ and minimise the disadvantages Boserup

¹⁶² Boserup, pp 53ff.

¹⁶³ Benería and Sen, p 43.

¹⁶⁴ Visavanthan, ‘Introduction to Part 1’, p 17.

¹⁶⁵ Benería and Sen, p 43.

¹⁶⁶ Asoka Bandarage, ‘Women in Development: Liberalism, Marxism and Marxist-Feminism’, *Development and Change*, vol. 15, 1894, pp 495-515, p 497.

¹⁶⁷ Tinker, pp 35-39.

¹⁶⁸ Visavanthan, ‘Introduction to Part 1’, p 18.

¹⁶⁹ Rathgeber, p 491.

¹⁷⁰ Bandarage, p 498.

presented. Concomitantly, equality is to be achieved through increasing civic and economic participation, especially through education.¹⁷¹ This paradigm was originally advocated by US liberal-feminists¹⁷² and embraced in international development agency circles because it does not present a theoretical challenge to accepted development thinking and dominant liberal political ideology. As part of the Western liberal tradition, WID highlights the importance of equality and justice alongside the cornerstone measures of efficiency, productivity and growth¹⁷³ where traditional values and structures create economic stagnation and underdevelopment.¹⁷⁴

WID asserts that ‘women can be liberated within the capitalist world system.’¹⁷⁵

While this paradigm emphasises the integration of women into ‘ongoing development initiatives’, it fails to question whether existing social structures or the inherent nature of modernisation and capital accumulation causes exploitative and subordinating effects on women.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, critics note that WID assumes access to income will rectify the challenges presented by the ‘basic social relations of gender’ and projects based on this paradigm singularly focus on productive work and income-generation while ignoring the reproductive aspects of women’s roles in society.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ Rathgeber, p 491.

¹⁷² Visavanthan, ‘Introduction to Part 1’, p 18.

¹⁷³ Tinker, p 39.

¹⁷⁴ Bandarage, p 497.

¹⁷⁵ Bandarage, p 496.

¹⁷⁶ Rathgeber, pp 491-492.

¹⁷⁷ Visavanthan, ‘Introduction to Part 1’, p 18.

However, this critique is somewhat simplistic. WID highlights that women are being marginalised and subordinated as a result of traditional development thinking which separated the public and domestic spheres¹⁷⁸ and only presented women as mothers.¹⁷⁹ The paradigm's compensation for this is to develop programs where women have a more active role in income-generation to support themselves and their community. The debate over the emphasis of WID theory and practice seems to exemplify the dilemma of modernity which faces all women: the balance between their reproductive and productive roles in society. Rathgeber is correct when pointing out the problems women face when they must 'juggle their time in such a way as to participate in yet another activity.'¹⁸⁰

2.1.2 Women and Development (WAD)

The late 1970s saw the emergence of WAD as a critique of modernisation theory and the WID paradigm.¹⁸¹ WAD is based on neo-Marxist dependency theory, which had also initially failed to consider issues of gender subordination.¹⁸² WAD also focuses on the relationship between women and development processes. However, WAD asserts that WID is incorrect in arguing that women's marginalisation was 'simply [an aberration] within an otherwise just and equitable social system' because women

¹⁷⁸ Bandarage, p 497.

¹⁷⁹ Tinker, p 39.

¹⁸⁰ Rathgeber, p 492.

¹⁸¹ Visavanthan, 'Introduction to Part 1', p 18.

¹⁸² Rathgeber, p 492.

have always been part of the development process and integration will not solve the problems of orthodox approaches.¹⁸³ WAD recognises

that women have always been important economic actors in their societies and that the work they do both inside and outside the household is central to the maintenance of those societies, but that this integration serves primarily to sustain existing international structures of inequality.¹⁸⁴

The neo-Marxist WAD approach argues that women cannot be liberated through capitalism. This paradigm highlights that income-generating projects that simply integrate women into the 'cash economy' tend to be in feminine trades such as handicrafts or factory work due to 'their supposed docility and natural agility for repetitive minute tasks' which actually 'ignore the exploitative class and sexual relations that underlie women's work.'¹⁸⁵ As factory workers, women in developing countries are 'the most heavily exploited group of workers' as a result of capitalist, imperialist and patriarchal structures and practices.¹⁸⁶ Marxist-feminists argue that the nature of the operation of manufacturing factories where women are paid lower wages for long hours shows how patriarchal institutions marginalize women within the capitalist wage-labour market.¹⁸⁷

However, like WID, WAD fails to adequately question the dynamics of gender relations because of its focus on the disadvantages suffered by both men and women as a result of the 'oppressive global structure based on class and capital.' WAD

¹⁸³ Visavanthan, 'Introduction to Part 1', p 18.

¹⁸⁴ Rathgeber, pp 492-493.

¹⁸⁵ Bandarage, p 503.

¹⁸⁶ Linda Y C Lim, 'Capitalism, Imperialism and Patriarchy: The Dilemma of Third-World Women Workers in Multinational Factories', in Nalini Visavanthan et al (eds), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997, pp 216-229, p223.

¹⁸⁷ Lim, p221.

simplistically argues that gender inequalities will be removed once international inequalities are overcome.¹⁸⁸ In focusing on the structures of capitalism, the neo-Marxist approach ignores ‘the oppression of women in pre-capitalist and ‘socialist’ societies ... and the cultural and psychological dimensions of sexual stratification.’¹⁸⁹ Bandarage has noted that if Marxist-feminism is to be relevant in modern analysis it must shed its ‘economic biases’ and reformulate its focus to the realities of female-headed households, “feminization of poverty”, changing sexual mores, emotional strain within and between the sexes, and the overarching presence of the patriarchal state and the mass media.¹⁹⁰ WAD has also been criticised for focusing exclusively on economic analyses without providing adequate consideration of biological roles.¹⁹¹

2.1.3 Gender and Development (GAD)

The GAD approach appeared in the 1980s as a response to criticism of both the liberal and neo-Marxist feminist approaches to development studies and practice. GAD is theoretically based upon socialist feminism and purports to bridge the gap in the WID and WAD approaches by ‘linking the relations of production and the relations of reproduction and taking into account all aspects of women’s lives.’¹⁹² This school examines gender relations as opposed to focusing on women *per se*. Furthermore, GAD claims to understand that men are not always exploiters of

¹⁸⁸ Rathgeber, p 493; Visavanthan, ‘Introduction to Part 1’, p 18.

¹⁸⁹ Bandarage, p 505.

¹⁹⁰ Bandarage, p 506.

¹⁹¹ Rathgeber, p 493.

¹⁹² Rathgeber, p 494.

women¹⁹³ and that gender relations are interlocked within a matrix of other relations such as class, race and religion.¹⁹⁴ GAD recognises that development is a complex social issue and proponents state that this paradigm takes a holistic approach which explores ‘the totality of social organisation, economic and political life in order to understand the shaping of particular aspects of society.’¹⁹⁵ Thus the GAD approach rejects the debate over the public/private dichotomy and focuses on addressing the need to balance domestic life with the political and economic spheres.¹⁹⁶

The socialist-feminist approach identifies ‘the social construction of production and reproduction as the basis of women’s oppression’ and seeks to examine why it is that women have systematically ‘been assigned to inferior and/or secondary roles.’¹⁹⁷ It has been observed that the GAD approach goes beyond simplistic Marxist-feminist views by distinguishing between capitalism, patriarchy and racism and making ‘strategic interventions to promote their agenda ... to respond to the needs of desperately poor women.’¹⁹⁸ Within this paradigm women are viewed ‘as agents of change rather than passive recipients of development assistance.’¹⁹⁹ The approach calls for women to organise themselves in order to achieve social, political and economic empowerment but underscores the need to move ‘beyond concerns with

¹⁹³ Visavanthan, ‘Introduction to Part 1’, p 23.

¹⁹⁴ Kate Young, ‘Gender and Development’, in Nalini Visavanthan et al (eds), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997, pp 51-54, p 51.

¹⁹⁵ Rathgeber, p 494.

¹⁹⁶ Young, p 52.

¹⁹⁷ Rathgeber, p 494.

¹⁹⁸ Visavanthan, ‘Introduction to Part 1’, p 24.

¹⁹⁹ Rathgeber, p 494.

economic self-sufficiency to the need for political self-reliance.²⁰⁰ GAD differs from the two previous theoretical approaches to feminist development in its identification of the need for the state to assist with the provision of social services such as health and childcare to assist women in their dual roles.²⁰¹ This is necessarily based on the socialist perspective of the role of the state as both an employer of labour and the distributor of social capital in a process which lays the foundations for continued economic and social development.²⁰²

The essential shortcoming of the GAD paradigm is its reliance on structural change which highlights the role of the community, at a national, local and kinship level, to support the emancipation of women and promote their dual roles as mothers and economic contributors.²⁰³ It has been difficult to integrate GAD thinking into mainstream development practice because of the dominance of neo-liberal ideology amongst development enablers at both international agency and national levels. These institutions are often reluctant to advocate and implement fundamental re-examinations of social structures and institutions as advocated by socialist feminists.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, development organisations maintain that the transformative nature of the GAD approach is 'not practically applicable, especially in emergency situations where logistical challenges are acute and survival is deemed

²⁰⁰ Young, p 53.

²⁰¹ Visavanthan, 'Introduction to Part 1', p 18.

²⁰² Young, p 53.

²⁰³ Young, p 53.

²⁰⁴ Rathgeber, p 495.

the goal.²⁰⁵ It has been suggested that it is ‘easier to develop GAD projects in the realm of research rather than in the realm of development practice or implementation’,²⁰⁶ and Rathgeber notes ‘a fully articulated GAD perspective is rarely found in the projects and practices of international development agencies although examples of partial GAD approaches can be identified.’²⁰⁷

2.2 Feminist Development: the Problems in Practice

Following the emergence of feminist critiques of development theory and practice in the 1970, and the documentation of the negative effects of ignoring ‘women’s contributions and their special needs’,²⁰⁸ the inclusion of women’s concerns on the development agenda resulted in significant changes to development practice. The UN Women’s Conferences and the Decade of Women were the symbolic representation of acceptance of feminist perspectives in development rhetoric and this was translated into practice by the work of governments, international agencies and NGOs. It has been noted however that while the rhetoric has been accepted by these institutions, ‘the actual process of ensuring equity for women ... is far from complete’ and often institutions focus only on the ‘advocacy of gender issues rather than actual program development and implementation.’²⁰⁹ Essentially, in practice, institutions ‘do not

²⁰⁵ Hyndman and de Alwis, p 214

²⁰⁶ Rathgeber, p 499.

²⁰⁷ Rathgeber, p 495.

²⁰⁸ Deniz Kandiyoti, ‘Women and Rural Development Policies: The Chancing Agenda’, *Development and Change*, vol. 21, 1990, pp 5-22, p 6.

²⁰⁹ Rathgeber, pp 495 and 497.

generally allow dimensions of gender or culture to change the assumptions of the overall planning framework in which field staff work.’²¹⁰

One of the most commonly observed problems is that projects ‘rarely move beyond the identification of differences in work done by men and women to actually implementing programs for change in gender relations.’²¹¹ Often, in circumstances of humanitarian emergency where survival is deemed the most important goal, NGOs seek to compromise by including gender considerations. However, in the majority of these cases, gender considerations simply involve “adding on” women beneficiaries or women’s perspectives to existing frameworks of intervention.²¹² Of course the case of humanitarian emergency assistance discussed here is different to that of long-term development projects; nevertheless, Rathgeber’s analysis of so-called feminist development practices highlights exactly the same eventuation.²¹³

2.2.1 Women and Income Generation

Most policy interventions which aim for positive gender ‘development’ are in the areas of population control, health services, food and nutrition and the alleviation of poverty through ‘income-generation’ projects.²¹⁴ The most significant aspect of implementing feminist development theory in practice is the continued dominance of

²¹⁰ Hyndman and de Alwis, p 213

²¹¹ Rathgeber, p 499.

²¹² Hyndman and de Alwis, pp 214-215.

²¹³ Rathgeber, pp 495ff.

²¹⁴ Kandiyoti, p 7.

the liberal-feminist WID paradigm in agency practices and projects.²¹⁵ While early development programming only focused on women's roles as reproducers rather than economic producers, processes of WID integration attempted to reverse this inequity by focusing on the economic perspective of development.²¹⁶ In line with classical liberal thinking, enterprise and business development is seen as the best way promote women's economic empowerment.²¹⁷ Home-based small businesses are considered a useful means for women to juggle domestic responsibilities with the task of generating income.²¹⁸

However, evaluations of WID projects highlight that

income-generating projects for women were rarely successful in improving the economic positions of participants. Moreover, job-training projects for women usually failed, because women lacked capital to establish small businesses where they could utilize their new skills.²¹⁹

Furthermore, projects which encourage women to take part in income generation activities burden women with the responsibility for poverty alleviation as well as domestic tasks. Making women the core of development activities fails to consider the sexual division of labour where women throughout the world are responsible for the bulk of subsistence work and unpaid domestic labour.²²⁰ Women are seen as good

²¹⁵ Gina Koczberski, 'Women in development: a critical analysis', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1998, pp 395-409, p 396; Rathgeber, pp 495.

²¹⁶ Tinker, p 39.

²¹⁷ M M Kuruppu and H L P Peris, *Issues and Challenges faced by women engaged in micro and small enterprises as revealed from impact studies on clients of SEEDS (Gte) Limited*, paper presented at the Ninth National Convention of Women's Studies, Colombo: Centre for Women's Research, 20-23 March 2004, p 1.

²¹⁸ M M Kuruppu, *Hurdles Faced by Home-Based Women Workers*, paper presented at National Workshop on Home-Based Workers, Colombo, 11 March 2002, p 4.

²¹⁹ Rathgeber, p 498.

²²⁰ Robin C Isserles, 'Microcredit: the Rhetoric of Empowerment, the Reality of "Development as Usual"', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 3/4, 2003, pp 38-57, p 48.

candidates for income-generation projects because they are apparently more “nurturing” and motivated to eradicate poverty in order to look after their families.²²¹ Where women’s tendencies to be “responsible” are idealized and men’s tendencies to gamble, drink, and not provide for their families are rationalised by a “‘boys will be boys’ mentality’, women’s burdens are significantly increased.²²² Furthermore, income-generation projects are often feminine activities such as food production and handicrafts which confines women to the domestic domain.²²³ As discussed above, the WID approach advocates the integration of women firmly ‘within the context of existing socioeconomic structures’²²⁴ and fails to question whether changing to these structures, whilst being more difficult, would in fact provide a more effective solution to the problems of women’s poverty and subordination in developing countries.

2.2.2 Women and Participatory Development Practices

Participatory development programs involve community-based research and project planning that allow for the implementation of relevant poverty-alleviation and development programs. These programs have become standard and common practice within the development industry including in Sri Lanka, as discussed in Chapter Three. In relation to women and development, the participatory approach has been credited for allowing women’s perspectives to be discussed and highlighted through

²²¹ Hennayake, p 6.

²²² Isserles, p 48.

²²³ Hennayake, p 7.

²²⁴ Rathgeber, p 496.

the community research and planning phases.²²⁵ While this approach has essentially become mainstream development practice, it has of course been subject to debate and criticism over its value and usefulness in actually integrating women into development process. General criticism has been made of the results of power relations within communities and with external facilitators who are involved in the process²²⁶ but more specific criticism has been made of the effect of the participatory development approach on women.

The main feminist criticism levelled at this approach is that often women cannot actually participate in the process, or are only able to be minimally involved. Mosse presents two reasons for the problems of women's involvement (or lack thereof) in participatory development projects in practice. Firstly, women were unable to actually participate because the 'time, location and collective presence' needed to be involved in community discussions and planning meetings are constrained by the structure of women's domestic work.²²⁷ The second reason was that meetings are held in public spaces and within many communities the exclusion of women from public life 'is so normal and "naturalised" that it is rarely noticed or questioned.'²²⁸

The representation of women in conventional development discourse portrays women from developing countries as 'powerless, ignorant and trapped in inferior roles' which has legitimised the ideas that these women must be assisted because do not

²²⁵ Mosse, p 512.

²²⁶ Kapoor, p 110.

²²⁷ Mosse, p 512.

²²⁸ Mosse, p 512.

have the skills to contribute to development planning.²²⁹ This has resulted in the assumption that outside ‘facilitators’ must drive the development process and women are rarely able to genuinely participate or have ‘control over how, or whether, they desire to be integrated into development projects.’²³⁰ Other examinations of participatory development practices have found that women can feel inferior, intimidated and alienated where the process involves male-orientated foundations such as ‘rational decision-making exercises, positivist judgement and solution-finding activities.’²³¹

These observations lend themselves to support the case for women’s-only activities (such as co-operatives and collectives) which build upon ‘alternative existing female networks or modes of co-operation’.²³² Programs of this variety undertaken in Sri Lanka (which will be discussed in Chapter Three) highlight that when working together, women are able to take part in their own brand of rational judgement and solution-finding processes to further their social and economic empowerment.

2.2.3 Women and Post-Development

The 1990’s saw the emergence of a reaction against mainstream development thinking which argued that negative consequences such as inequality are intrinsic to

²²⁹ Koczberski, p 401.

²³⁰ Koczberski, p 401.

²³¹ Sanderson and Kindon, p 117.

²³² Kandiyoti, pp 17-18.

development rather than unintentional side-effects.²³³ Post-development theory highlights that mainstream development discourse and practice is a Western construct that reinforces global inequalities.²³⁴ Feminist post-development thought highlights how women in developing countries 'continue to grapple with how to address gender discrimination and interrelated issues of racial, economic, and religious oppression from an autonomous standpoint.'²³⁵ Women's organisations have often been successful in gaining political empowerment in protesting against the conditions which have resulted in their poverty and subordination but Lind point out that often, despite a

movement's perceived success, many participants... complain about being exhausted, underpaid, and living in continual poverty. What is considered a 'success' by some in the development field may be a bigger burden for the women involved.²³⁶

In order to grasp the 'complexity of the challenges women face for survival', feminist post-development thought calls for the deconstruction of 'the philosophical and material foundations of the development field'.²³⁷ Like mainstream post-development thought, however, feminist post-development simply criticizes existing theories without offering clear, viable and practical solutions to these problems.

²³³ Matthews, p 374.

²³⁴ Amy Lind, 'Feminist Post-Development Thought: "Women in Development" and the Gendered Paradoxes of Survival in Bolivia', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 3/4, 2003, pp 227-246, p 229.

²³⁵ Lind, p 227.

²³⁶ Lind, pp 232-233.

²³⁷ Lind, pp 233 and 238.

2.3 Conclusion

The theoretical debate surrounding the development of women was sparked by the recognition that traditional development practices which aim for economic growth and modernisation ‘could have negative consequences for women ... by increasing already existing inequalities between men and women.’²³⁸ Academic discussion on the matter was soon accepted into mainstream development thinking and practice. As a result, development processes that targeted women provided some of the best improvements in development.

The feminist approaches to development thinking generally follows orthodox theory but highlights that previous development thinking has ignored women and argued for a more concerted effort to support women’s empowerment. The liberal-feminist WID paradigm, which promotes the integration of women within existing social structures and ideas of modernisation and economic growth, continues to be the most prominent in development practice given the dominance of neo-liberalism in the international arena.²³⁹

While WID has made an important contribution in highlighting the marginalization of women in conventional development thinking, it fails to provide concrete solutions to the problems of gender relations in developing countries.²⁴⁰ Marxist-feminist WAD theory highlights the relationship between women and development processes and

²³⁸ Frances Vavrus and Lisa Ann Richley, ‘Editorial – Women and Development: Rethinking Policy and Reconceptualizing Practice’, *Women’s Studies Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 3/4, 2003, pp 6-18, p 8.

²³⁹ See Koczberski, p 396.

²⁴⁰ See Rathgeber, p 492.

argues the nature of modernisation and capitalist development causes underdevelopment and poverty. However, WAD focuses on the need to change the structures of global capitalism in order to ensure gender-equality and given the continued dominance of neo-liberal thinking on the international agenda, this paradigm cannot offer a great deal in actuality. The GAD approach, which emerged as a socialist-feminist critique of modernisation theory,²⁴¹ proposes to provide a solution to the difficulty of balancing women's reproductive and productive roles but development institutions have been reluctant to support the sweeping structural changes advocated by this paradigm.

Thirty years on from UN Decade of Women, and after numerous conferences, theories, projects and plans, the international community is still calling for solutions to the fact that 'the global economic situation for women and men has deteriorated, leading to something of the highest inequalities we have seen'.²⁴² Essentially, development is about structural change in order to alleviate the poverty and subordination that grows out of the nature of existing socio-economic circumstances. Therefore advocates of the GAD approach should campaign harder to governments, development agencies and international organisations to highlight the importance of making complex structural changes if development is to move beyond simply being rhetoric and have a positive effect on people's lives all over the world.

²⁴¹ Hyndman and de Alwis, p 214.

²⁴² Lind, p 230.

The central issue which can be distilled from the debate surrounding feminist development theory is balancing the complex socio-economic roles women must fulfil in their everyday lives within the process of achieving the daunting goals of 'poverty alleviation' and 'development'. This task is mirrored in actual development processes and practices that have been formulated from the ideas articulated in the theory. Chapter Four of this study will examine if and how these development practices have been implemented in Sri Lanka to allow women to attain the goals of development while balancing their lives as mothers and workers.

Chapter Three: Sri Lanka's Development Experience

3.0 Introduction

The case of Sri Lanka shows that neither providing extensive social policies nor encouraging economic development have been completely successful in alleviating poverty and promoting equity in society. This chapter examines Sri Lanka's development experience since 1948 in two parts. The first section focuses on government policies at a macroeconomic level and the specific poverty reduction policies which were implemented to encourage human development. This examination will show the influence of development theory on government policy making and the conclusion to be drawn here reiterates the failure of orthodox macroeconomic development theory as discussed in Chapter One. The second section will explore the approaches taken by three different NGOs carrying out development programs at the grassroots level in Sri Lanka. The approaches of these NGOs display influences from the alternative models for development explored in Chapter One, but while their goals are similar all three organisations operate with unique practices and processes.

3.1 Sri Lanka as part of the Global South

Sri Lanka is an island-nation off the southern coast of the India with a population of approximately 20 million people.²⁴³ The population features several ethnic and cultural groups including Sinhalese, Tamil, Moors, Malays and Burghers (of European decent) and the main religions are Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity.²⁴⁴ The island was colonised by the Portuguese, Dutch and British since the 16th century and became a multi-party parliamentary democracy after gaining political independence in 1948.²⁴⁵ The civil war between the Sinhalese and Tamil separatists began in 1983 and while a peace deal was brokered by Norway in 2002,²⁴⁶ peace talks stalled in April 2005. The fragile ceasefire appears to be faltering as violence and tension began to slowly escalate in July 2005.²⁴⁷

Sri Lanka has long been considered a ‘developing country’, and can ascribe to the characteristics of a Global South country as a former colony which has a low national income and struggles to deal with the poverty of its citizens. After over half a century of ‘development’ through national policies implemented since independence, Sri Lanka is yet to reach the ultimate objective of this process. In 2004, Sri Lanka was ranked 96th out of 177 countries according to the United Nation’s Human

²⁴³ CIA, *The World Fact Book – Sri Lanka*, 4 October 2005, Central Intelligence Agency, USA, viewed 26 October 2005, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ce.html>.

²⁴⁴ Bernard Swan, ‘Peace: Sri Lanka’s Impossible Dream?’ in Siri Gamage and IB Watson (eds), *Conflict and Community in Contemporary Sri Lanka: ‘Pearl of the East’ or the ‘Island of Tears’?*, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999, pp 7-22, p 17. This chapter extensively introduces Sri Lanka’s social background in relation to the ethnic conflict.

²⁴⁵ Swan, p 17.

²⁴⁶ CIA, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ce.html>.

²⁴⁷ CNN, *Sri Lanka killing ‘act of terror’*, CNN.com World, 13 August 2005, viewed 2 September 2005, <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/asiapcf/08/13/sri.lanka.world.ap/>.

Development Index; this ranking brought the nation within the group which as 'medium human development'.²⁴⁸

Despite several decades of government policies which have provided universal healthcare and education programs, income poverty and inequality continues to be a problem.²⁴⁹ Poverty in Sri Lanka is high relative to per capita GDP figures.

According to a UNDP report on Sri Lanka's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, approximately 30-40% of the nation's 20 million citizens are considered poor and of those, 90% are from rural areas.²⁵⁰ The 2002 figures showed 22.7% of the population live below the poverty line; this figure was 26.1% in 1990,²⁵¹ indicating slow progress towards the MDG target of halving poverty by 2015.²⁵² Poverty rates in Sri Lanka show significant variation amounts regions of the country. While urban poverty halved in the 1990s, rural poverty only fell by about 5% and poverty in the estate sector actually doubled.²⁵³ Poverty in Sri Lanka affects mainly the working poor, such as landless labourers, small-scale farmers, construction and domestic workers.²⁵⁴ A World Bank report published in

²⁴⁸ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 140.

²⁴⁹ World Bank, *Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002 (available online: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDS_IBank_Servlet?pcont=details&eid=000094946_02080904021260), p 1.

²⁵⁰ UNDP and National Council for Economic Development (NCED) Sri Lanka, Millennium Development Goals Country Report 2005: Sri Lanka, Colombo: UNDP and NCED, 2005, p 21.

²⁵¹ World Bank, *Sri Lanka Development Forum: The Economy, the Tsunami and Poverty Reduction*, Washington DC: World Bank South Asia Region Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Unit, 2005, (available online: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2005/05/04/000012009_20050504103139/Rendered/PDF/322210LK.pdf), p 18.

²⁵² UNDP and NCED, p 25.

²⁵³ World Bank, *Sri Lanka Development Forum*, p 18.

²⁵⁴ Asian Development Bank, *Country Gender Assessment: Sri Lanka*, Manila: Asian Development Bank South Asia Regional Department and Regional and Sustainable Development Department, 2004, p 41.

July 2005 summarised that poverty in Sri Lanka is unequally ‘concentrated in geographically isolated areas (in terms of distance to markets and cities), the estate sector, and among households with agricultural wage employees.’²⁵⁵

3.2 Development in Sri Lanka – Government Policies and Processes

3.2.1 Macroeconomic Approaches

Upon gaining independence from Britain in 1948, Sri Lanka’s economic policy was driven by three major development goals: ‘reasonable economic growth, greater equity, and greater self-reliance or national control over economic activities.’²⁵⁶ The two-fold challenge faced by Sri Lanka after independence was similar to that of other post-colonial nations—economic development coupled with the task of building a ‘nation’.²⁵⁷ In the following fifty and beyond, Sri Lankan governments sought to achieve economic development and growth through various approaches which more or less have aligned with ideological shifts in economic thinking.²⁵⁸ The 1950s saw the implementation of the free-enterprise model under Sri Lanka’s first Prime

²⁵⁵ Ambar Narayan and Nobuo Yoshida, *Poverty in Sri Lanka: the Impact of Growth and Rising Inequality*, SASPR Working Paper Report No 8, Washington DC: World Bank, 2005, (available online: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2005/08/09/000090341_20050809095814/Rendered/PDF/332590PAPER0SASPR18.pdf), p 13.

²⁵⁶ Dushni Weerakoon, ‘The Influence of Development Ideology in Macroeconomic Policy Reform Process’ in Saman Kelegama (ed), *Economic Policy in Sri Lanka: Issues and Debates*, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004, pp 54-70, p 54.

²⁵⁷ Weerakoon, p 54.

²⁵⁸ Weerakoon, p 57.

Minister D S Senanayake. Economic policy during this era followed the classical liberal approach in diversifying the mercantilist export-base which included tea and rubber and focussing on capital accumulation. This policy was in line with Lewis' classical economic argument for expanding urban industry and moving away from subsistence agriculture in order to generate growth and encourage development.²⁵⁹ However, the volatility of the international market and commodity prices resulted in less²⁶⁰ than favourable terms of trade and economic stagnation.²⁶¹

S W R D Bandaranaike's socialist government promoted a centrally controlled economic system following their ascension to power in 1959, and state control and nationalisation of trade and industry was increased in the early 1970s. This era was also marked by heavy social investment in healthcare and education which produced favourable human development conditions. Bandaranaike's 'leftist agenda of social and economic development' was also influenced by Buddhist values, but those two decades of socialist policies, particularly nationalisation had a negative impact on economic growth due to the costs of social policies, particularly food subsidies,²⁶² and the prevention of free-trade enterprise. In addition, Sri Lanka's economy also suffered from the international oil shock of 1973.

²⁵⁹ Todaro, p 84.

²⁶⁰ Bond, p 1.

²⁶¹ Weerakoon, pp 58-60.

²⁶² Lal Jayawardena, 'Understanding Reforms: 1960-2000' in Saman Kelegama (ed), *Economic Policy in Sri Lanka: Issues and Debates*, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004, pp 96-198, p 98.

The latter part of the 1970s saw the introduction of sweeping reforms and ideological shifts following JR Jayewardene's election as Prime Minister. The paradigm of economic liberalisation continued to influence policy through to the 1980s, and practices such as lowering import tariffs, establishing tax and regulation-free 'free trade zones' to attract foreign manufacturers,²⁶³ easing foreign investment restrictions and deregulating the finance sector plus a 'mini-boom' in the price of tea resulted in dramatic growth. However, public investment policies, the second oil shock of 1979 and deteriorating terms of trade resulted in economic instability.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, agricultural import-substitution policies (in line with Singer's dependency analysis²⁶⁵) which banned importation of food which could be produced domestically, particularly protein-rich pulses and dried fish resulted in increasing malnutrition.²⁶⁶

The fluctuations in government approaches and ideologies are a result of the democratic system in Sri Lanka, but the mixed results of various policies have been ascribed to the faults of electoral opportunism.²⁶⁷ Annual GDP growth averaged 3.5% in the 1990s but income poverty reduction has been 'modest and even'.²⁶⁸ Despite per capita GDP rising from around US\$800 in 2002²⁶⁹ to over US\$1000 in 2004, the number of poor Sri Lankans still hovers around 30-40%.²⁷⁰ The failures of macroeconomic policies to lead Sri Lanka to achieving development goals since

²⁶³ Weerakoon, p 63.

²⁶⁴ Weerakoon, p 61.

²⁶⁵ Prebisch, p 98; Gilpin, p 277.

²⁶⁶ See Jayawardena, p 100.

²⁶⁷ Jayawardena, p 102.

²⁶⁸ Narayan and Yoshida, p 1.

²⁶⁹ World Bank, *Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment*, p 2.

²⁷⁰ UNDP and NCED, p 21.

independence can be ascribed to the failures of orthodox development theory as discussed in Chapter One.

Regardless, these theories continue to influence development policy. In 2002 the World Bank argued that liberalisation policies implemented in the 1970s and 1980s were far from adequate and called for further deregulation and privatization to encourage growth. However, the report accepted that the civil conflict had a negative impact on Sri Lanka's potential for economic development.²⁷¹ Up to 6% of GDP was spent on defence²⁷² as a result of the conflict between the Government and Tamil separatists, but the cease-fire negotiated in 2002 failed to bring about accelerated growth. A further challenge to Sri Lanka's potential for development is the massive public debt crisis, which in 2004 amounted to 104% of GDP.²⁷³ It is clear that dependency theory is also applicable to the case of Sri Lanka to explain the country's economic subordination to more developed countries in the international system.²⁷⁴ Sri Lanka's 'inferior position within the world's marketing economy' has resulted in the economy suffering 'from terms of trade that deteriorated continually since independence.'²⁷⁵

In 2005, the current government of Sri Lanka under President Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandaranaike responded to the impetus of the UN's Millennium

²⁷¹ World Bank, *Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment*, p 3.

²⁷² The budget deficit at this stage in the 1990s amounted to 9.5% GDP: Jayawardena, p 101.

²⁷³ UNDP and NCED, p 15.

²⁷⁴ Hulme and Turner, p 46.

²⁷⁵ Swan, p16.

Development Project with a strong commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The central focus of the current government's policy is the public debt crisis and they seek to stimulate the economy through 'improving productivity and removing barriers to this task by accelerating the pace of privatisation and deregulation.'²⁷⁶ The National Development Strategy which was devised in 2005 proposes that a combination of 'a strong socially responsible private sector and a strong public sector' as well as an economic framework 'based on market friendly, export orientated strategies' will promote poverty reduction, rural development and environmental protection.²⁷⁷ The results of this rhetoric remain to be seen.

3.2.2 Poverty Reduction Strategies

While economic growth in Sri Lanka has averaged around 5% GDP over the past two decades, there has been slow and uneven progress in poverty reduction, particularly in rural and estate areas.²⁷⁸ It is generally considered that the problems with growth and poverty reduction in Sri Lanka are the result of the 'lack of access to market opportunities, infrastructure and employment opportunities' in the country.²⁷⁹ The World Bank cites that Sri Lanka requires 'support-led' strategies for poverty reduction because 'economic growth occurs too slowly to provide substantial benefits

²⁷⁶ Asian Development Bank, p 32.

²⁷⁷ Government of Sri Lanka, *Creating Our Future Building Our Nation: Economic Policy Framework of the Government of Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Ministry of Finance, 2005, (available online: <http://www.erd.gov.lk/publicweb/publications/epsg/ecopolstgov.pdf>) p 9.

²⁷⁸ World Bank, *Sri Lanka Development Forum*, p 1.

²⁷⁹ Narayan and Yoshida, p 8.

to the poor within a reasonable period of time and that the government must, therefore, act to ensure a minimum standard of living.²⁸⁰

Social welfare has been a cornerstone of government policy in Sri Lanka even before independence,²⁸¹ and as a result, indicators for human development are relatively high for a nation with Sri Lanka's income poverty levels. Sri Lanka's social welfare policies have resulted in a fairly high standard of living compared to other developing countries as shown by high life expectancy, low infant mortality and high levels of adult literacy.²⁸² In addition to strategies for economic growth which encourage development, create employment and increase the standard of living, specific government policies have sought to achieve human development through health and education services and direct interventions to assist people who have been adequately assisted by growth-related policies.²⁸³

The rationale behind the welfare policies of successive Sri Lankan governments since independence was based around ideas of relative poverty and 'redistributive justice' in a society which was distinctly split with a modern, industrial, urban, income generating sector and a traditional, rural, subsistence agriculture-based sector within

²⁸⁰ World Bank, *Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment*, Washington, p 1.

²⁸¹ Buddhadasa Hewavitharana, 'Poverty Alleviation' in Saman Kelegama (ed), *Economic Policy in Sri Lanka: Issues and Debates*, New Delhi and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004, pp 467-495, p 473.

²⁸² Surjit S Bhalla and Paul Glewwe, 'Growth and Equity in Developing Countries: A Reinterpretation of the Sri Lankan Experience', *The World Bank Economic Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1986, pp 35-63, p 35; see also UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 140.

²⁸³ United Nations, *Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, Department for Environment and Social Affairs Division for Sustainable Development, 19 December 1997, viewed 4 June 2005, <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/lanka-cp.htm>.

which 90% of the poor live.²⁸⁴ During the 1960s and 1970s, expenditure on social policies averaged between 9-10% GDP.²⁸⁵ This massive investment in social development included free health care, universal free education and food subsidies. It was these policies which have resulted in high human development indicators such as a life expectancy of 72.5 years, and adult literacy rate of 92.1%,²⁸⁶ and an infant mortality rate of 17 per 1000 live births²⁸⁷ in 2002. These figures are amongst the lowest in developing countries.²⁸⁸ However, as discussed above, Sri Lanka's success in human development did not translate into reduction in income poverty and this has been described by one commentator as the nation's 'most spectacular failure'.²⁸⁹

Specific programs aimed at alleviating income poverty were introduced in the 1980s, first with the Janasaviya Program and its successor the Samurdhi Program which began operating in the mid 1990s.²⁹⁰ As the 'major strategy of State intervention to combat poverty amongst marginalised groups' the Samurdhi program has a two-fold implementation as an income supplement program and a socio-economic development program which aims to stimulate employment.²⁹¹ Asset creation and income support programs are operated through micro-financing and income transfer measures, as well as through the establishment of a network of Samurdhi Banks to

²⁸⁴ Hewavitharana, p 473-474.

²⁸⁵ Jayawardena, p 96.

²⁸⁶ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 140.

²⁸⁷ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 169.

²⁸⁸ Jayawardena, p 96.

²⁸⁹ Jayawardena, p 96.

²⁹⁰ United Nations, *Johannesburg Summit 2002: Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, New York: United Nations Department for Environment and Social Affairs World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002, (available online: www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/wssd/srilanka.pdf), p 3.

²⁹¹ United Nations, *Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/lanka-cp.htm>.

assist the rural poor.²⁹² Low interest loans are provided for small and medium-scale businesses to assist with income generating activities and the Samurdhi Economic Infrastructure development programs provide funds for community infrastructure projects.²⁹³ More direct income support is provided with cash grants to 2.1 million families and an additional 82,000 families on the infant nutrition program in 2002.²⁹⁴ The Samurdhi program continues to be a cornerstone of the Sri Lankan government's poverty alleviation strategy, but it should be noted that two decades after the initiation of these programs, the government continues to produce policy paper after policy paper on poverty reduction strategies and the country is not on track to achieve MDG targets on poverty reduction.²⁹⁵

3.3 NGOs and Development in Sri Lanka

Government policies such as the Samurdhi program seek to provide direct intervention to alleviate poverty on the ground in Sri Lanka where the 'trickle down' outcomes of macroeconomic growth policy do not or are slow to eventuate. However, programs which simply provided food and cash handouts create problems of dependency and do not encourage self-reliant and sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies which can be continued once government funds are

²⁹² United Nations, *Johannesburg Summit 2002: Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, p 3.

²⁹³ United Nations, *Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/lanka-cp.htm>.

²⁹⁴ Government of Sri Lanka, *Regaining Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Ministry of Finance, 2002, (available online: <http://www.erd.gov.lk/publicweb/ERDDOCS.html>) p 80.

²⁹⁵ UNDP and NCED, p 25.

exhausted or specific programs have come to their scheduled end.²⁹⁶ Projects which encourage sustainable development such as enterprise support programs are more successful and these components are also similar to the projects implemented by development NGOs. The operational practices of the three NGOs discussed in this section display influences from alternative ideas of development discussed in Chapter One, particularly participatory development. All three have implemented development programs specifically aimed at assisting women in Sri Lanka but for the purposes of this chapter I will just provide an overview of their general approaches.

3.3.1 Sewalanka

Sewalanka Foundation was established as a development NGO in 1993, at the height of the civil conflict in Sri Lanka between the government and the Tamil separatists. The organisation's mandate was 'to address the needs of the most vulnerable communities in the most neglected and disadvantaged regions' of the nation, and in the early days of its operation Sewalanka worked to provide relief and humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected communities in the North and East.²⁹⁷ Over a decade later, when the needs of these communities have changed, Sewalanka now operates to assist communities with long-term sustainable development strategies and programs. These programs include training, support and facilitation of services such as 'micro-finance, enterprise formation and management, agricultural production and marketing, sustainable technology development and community-based natural

²⁹⁶ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 63.

²⁹⁷ Sewalanka Foundation, *Organisation Profile*, Colombo: Sewalanka Media Unit, 2003, p 2.

resource management.²⁹⁸ The organisations programs and operations are funded by international donor partners which include the World Bank, CARE International, UNDP and OXFAM as well as aid agencies from countries such as Germany and the Netherlands.

Sewalanka's development programs display influences from alternative theories of development which gained prominence in the past two decades. The foundation's mission statement reads:

The mission of Sewalanka is to enhance the capacity of rural communities to democratically identify and address their own development needs and to provide services that contribute to the economically viable, socially just and ecologically sustainable development of Sri Lanka.²⁹⁹

Aspects of participatory development form the basis of Sewalanka's research and socio-economic surveys which have been undertaken for projects supported by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.³⁰⁰ The organisation responds to the findings of this research with specific needs-based programs which are appropriate for the communities involved and the regions from which they come, for example, fisheries development in lagoon fishing communities and drip-irrigation infrastructure development in dry-zone farming regions.³⁰¹ In addition, Sewalanka's Micro-finance and Enterprise Development Division provide micro and small-business development services to individuals and community based organisations and cooperatives.³⁰² All of these programs and projects are supported by training and

²⁹⁸ Sewalanka Foundation, *Annual Report 2002-2003*, Colombo: Sewalanka Foundation, 2003, p 4.

²⁹⁹ Sewalanka Foundation, *Annual Report 2002-2003*, p 2.

³⁰⁰ Sewalanka Foundation, *Annual Report 2002-2003*, p 4.

³⁰¹ Sewalanka Foundation, *Annual Report 2002-2003*, pp 4-5.

³⁰² Kaushalya Nawaratne, Sewalanka Foundation, interview with author, 20 June 2005.

appraisal modules through the Social Development Division which continue assessment and monitoring while the programs are operational.³⁰³

3.3.2 Sarvodaya

The Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya has its beginnings in 1958 when high school science teacher A T Ariyaratne took a group of his students to work in a remote, low-caste village. Their *shramadana*, ‘gift of labour’, included assisting the villagers to dig wells, build toilets, establish a religious centre and repair the school. This small ‘educational experiment’ spawned a movement of volunteers who sought to engage with disadvantaged communities and assist their ‘development’.³⁰⁴ Sarvodaya’s vision for ‘development’ is fairly unique when compared with orthodox theories and approaches. In Sanskrit and subsequent Gandhian usage, *sarvodaya* means ‘welfare for all’,³⁰⁵ but this term was adapted by Ariyaratne to mean ‘awakening of all’ in the context of Buddhist values where individuals in societies ‘are encouraged to awaken and actualize.’³⁰⁶

Sarvodaya’s approach to development is not of modernisation or industrialisation but of ‘people waking up together’³⁰⁷ and pursuing ‘an alternative, simple, and sustainable lifestyle based on reducing material desires’ because orthodox economic policies aimed at growth fostered consumerism and widened the divide between rich

³⁰³ Sewalanka Foundation, *Annual Report 2002-2003*, p 4.

³⁰⁴ Bond, pp 7-8.

³⁰⁵ Bond, p 8.

³⁰⁶ Bond, p 10.

³⁰⁷ Janna Macy, ‘Forward’ in Bond, pp xi-xii, p xi.

and poor.³⁰⁸ Sarvodaya represents a broad philosophy which can be seen as a drive to social revolution in Sri Lanka. Ariyaratne's vision was to break the 'violent, oppressive system' which prevailed as a result of the pyramid-like political and economic structure in Sri Lanka and replace it with a system of participatory village democracy.³⁰⁹ This approach is very similar to the phenomenon of social movements and radical democracy advocated by the post-development school.³¹⁰ Sarvodaya's village development processes lies 'outside major political alignments',³¹¹ and places community and cultural considerations at the forefront of the development agenda.

Sarvodaya's development focus is to facilitate 'conscious change within concrete communities through a process of social awareness, welfare and community development',³¹² with collective social action through a network of around 12 000 Sarvodaya Shramadana Societies.³¹³ The community development process is centred on each village which forms a Shramadana Society. The first stage of the process involves the identification of local needs followed by a shramadana camp³¹⁴ where the villagers work together on a project which benefits the whole community. This work lays 'the foundation for the physical, spiritual, and social infrastructures that [are] necessary for village awakening.'³¹⁵ Once the physical infrastructure has been developed, Sarvodaya works on developing the village's social infrastructure by

³⁰⁸ Bond, p 43.

³⁰⁹ Bond, p 44.

³¹⁰ See Mohan and Stoke, pp 259ff.

³¹¹ Mohan and Stoke, p 259.

³¹² Sarvodaya, *Annual Service Report 1 April 2003 – 31 March 2004*, Moratuwa: Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya, 2004, p xi.

³¹³ Sarath Hewagama, Sarvodaya General Secretary, interview with author, 27 June 2005.

³¹⁴ Bond, p 56.

³¹⁵ Bond, p 21.

organising groups; typically there are groups for children, youth, mothers and farmers. These groups ‘provide peer communities that facilitate the awakening of the member, and they serve to establish some of Sarvodaya’s basic services for the village, including leadership training and nutrition programs.’³¹⁶ I will describe these services in more detail when discussing Sarvodaya’s programs for women’s empowerment in the village in Chapter Four.

Once the physical, social and spiritual infrastructure of the village has been established, the third and fourth stages of the process promote self-reliance and sustainable growth. This involves the establishment of the Shramadana Society as a legally incorporated body which can hold property, control a bank account and undertake projects which satisfy the basic needs of the village. Upon social empowerment, economic empowerment is then facilitated through generating income and employment,³¹⁷ and this stage is supported by Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services (SEEDS). The operation of SEEDS focuses on village banking and micro-credit programs ‘to alleviate poverty by encouraging grassroots enterprises and initiatives.’³¹⁸ SEEDS assists around 3000 village Shramadana Societies by mobilising savings and providing loans to members ranging from Rs3 000 - Rs500 000 to assist individuals and villages to develop themselves.³¹⁹ The Rural Enterprises Development Services programs provide business training and financial advice to

³¹⁶ Bond, pp 21-22.

³¹⁷ Sarvodaya, p 1.

³¹⁸ Bond, p 62.

³¹⁹ Hewagama, interview with author, 27 June 2005.

assist borrowers³²⁰ and as a result repayment rates in the past decade have been around 90%.³²¹ These development programs have been highly successful and appreciated by those they seek to assist.³²²

3.3.3 Siyath

In Sinhalese, the term *siyath* can have two meanings: one hundred hands and one's own hand.³²³ This double meaning captures the dual nature of Siyath Foundation's approach to participatory development, which involves empowerment through self-reliance and collective action.³²⁴ Siyath Foundation is a small NGO which was established in 1986 in response to fieldwork and research conducted a few years earlier by Kamala Peris, a former Director of Sri Lanka's Education Ministry and Carla Risseuw, an academic from Leiden University in the Netherlands. Their study focused on the coir (coconut fibre) industry and the power struggles between producers and traders at the village level³²⁵ which exacerbated a vicious cycle of poverty and dependence.³²⁶

Following the publication of their findings, which concluded with the creation of an ideal development program to assist the coir producers to break out of their poverty

³²⁰ SEEDS, *A History of Development 1987-1999*, Moratuwa: Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services (Gte) Ltd, 1999, p 26.

³²¹ SEEDS, *Annual Report 2003-2004*, Moratuwa: Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services (Gte) Ltd, 2004, p 35.

³²² Bond, p 63.

³²³ Kamala Peris, interview with author, 20 June 2005.

³²⁴ Peris, interview with author, 20 June 2005. See also Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 19.

³²⁵ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 17.

³²⁶ Peris, interview with author, 20 June 2005.

trap, Peris and Risseeuw were offered a grant from the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation to actualise and implement their conceptual project.³²⁷ The approach is essentially in line with participatory development practices and was based on the UNDP Change Agents approach³²⁸ which had been operational in Sri Lanka since the 1980s.³²⁹

Siyath presents a very interesting development approach within the scope of this thesis as the organisation's focus is singularly on empowering women, who form the majority of the workforce in small-scale coir production in Sri Lanka.³³⁰ The most labour intensive tasks such as obtaining fibre from coconut husks and spinning yarn are performed by women.³³¹ In general terms, Siyath's approach entailed facilitating the participants' (not 'beneficiaries' or 'target groups') autonomy (not 'empowerment', as the use of this term was thought to imply initial helplessness)³³² within the coir industry. The production level of the coir industry generally involves coir traders supplying raw materials on credit to the spinners for processing (usually spinning into yarn) which is then sold back to the traders. Payment is rarely in cash and more likely to be in kind in the form of necessities from the trader's local store. Price fluctuations (and simple exploitation) often resulted in the spinners being permanently indebted to the trader.³³³

³²⁷ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 17.

³²⁸ Peris, interview with author, 20 June 2005.

³²⁹ Hennayake, p 3; see also Perera.

³³⁰ Carla Risseeuw, *The Wrong End of the Rope: Women Coir Workers in Sri Lanka*, Leiden: Research Project Women and Development, 1980, p 33.

³³¹ Risseeuw, p 67.

³³² Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 19.

³³³ Peris, interview with author, 20 June 2005.

The initial stage of Siyath's participatory development process involves the introduction of 'facilitators' into villages where coir processing is taking place. The facilitators make needs assessments and get to know the women who will ultimately be participating in and benefiting from the process. Upon acceptance into the community, the relationships built amongst the local coir-spinning women are used to form collectives. The women in these collectives work together to establish group savings and are able to ensure better return for their labour. By purchasing the coconut in bulk from group funds and then locating other distributors to sell the finished yarn to, the coir workers are able to break out of their debts to local traders and gain economic autonomy.³³⁴ The collectives are also able to take out loans to finance further development where individuals would have been unable to do so. All the actions of the collectives and the individuals are discussed, decided upon and planned at weekly meetings, giving each participant a sense of satisfaction and self-worth.³³⁵

Peris writes that evidence of the success of this model of participatory development is when facilitation is no longer necessary and the workers are able to drive their own success, 'without the physical presence of external agents, animators or mediators.'³³⁶

Peris presents data to quantify the success of this approach in *Weaving a Future*

³³⁴ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 38.

³³⁵ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 12.

³³⁶ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 100.

*Together*³³⁷ but also writes of ‘intangible’ success in the form of the personal development—social and business skills, sense of self-worth, solidarity—of the participants.³³⁸ Once the workers were self-reliant in their enterprises, Siyath took on the role of co-ordinating international sales and marketing with the assistance of the Sri Lanka Export Development Board.³³⁹ Following the success with coir villages in the south, Siyath Foundation has since expanded and modified their programs to encompass farming in the Anuradhapura area and market villages around Piliandala.³⁴⁰

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between the theories of development discussed in Chapter One and the actual development policies, programs and processes which have been or are currently operational in Sri Lanka. Orthodox approaches to development have influenced the nation’s macroeconomic policy for over half a century with limited success. The current international dominance of the neo-liberal paradigm has also influenced Sri Lanka’s contemporary development approaches. Given the lack of previous success from policies of free-trade, deregulation and privatisation, one must question whether this is the most suitable

³³⁷ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, pp 43-44.

³³⁸ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, pp 44-45.

³³⁹ Peris, interview with author, 20 June 2005; see also, Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 47.

³⁴⁰ Peris, interview with author, 20 June 2005.

path for Sri Lanka to take if it truly wishes to tackle the problems of poverty and underdevelopment.

As seen in earlier discussion, economic growth by itself cannot reduce poverty without ‘asset redistribution and provision of basic services.’³⁴¹ More specific programs aimed at poverty alleviation on a community level have been influenced by alternative theories of development, particularly that of participatory development. These programs—facilitated at both a governmental and non-governmental level—have shown relative success in improving human development, and in addition, micro-enterprise development has allowed for communities to be more self-reliant and economically and socially empowered. The following chapter will look at the specific situation of women and poverty in Sri Lanka and how development theory has influenced their empowerment.

³⁴¹ Asian Development Bank, p 41.

Chapter Four: Development and Women in Sri Lanka

4.0 Introduction – The Status of Women in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka was the first nation in the world to have a female Prime Minister³⁴² and in some aspects of their lives Sri Lankan women can claim to enjoy standards of living which are higher than their sisters in other less-developed countries.³⁴³ Nearly six decades of positive social programs such as the provision of universal education, healthcare and food subsidies have meant that Sri Lanka has gender parity in social welfare and relatively high levels of literacy³⁴⁴ and health indicators.³⁴⁵ The international acceptance of women's rights as human rights has driven the enshrinement of anti-discrimination and universal suffrage standards in national law.³⁴⁶ Despite issues with patriarchal norms and domestic violence, Sri Lankan society does not generally have problems with 'extreme forms of gender discrimination within families such as dowry deaths, foeticide, infanticide and neglect of the girl child.'³⁴⁷ Gender relations within families have also become more equitable as a result of economic empowerment.

³⁴² Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who came to office in 1960.

³⁴³ United Nations, *Johannesburg Summit 2002: Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, p 106.

³⁴⁴ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 226.

³⁴⁵ Swarana Sumanasekera (Chairperson, National Committee of Women, Sri Lanka), *Statement at the Forty-Ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women*, New York: Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, 2005, p 2.

³⁴⁶ UNDP and NCED, p 43.

³⁴⁷ Asian Development Bank, pp 27-28.

Nevertheless, the problems of poverty in Sri Lanka means that women from low-income communities ‘whose labour inputs are crucial to the survival and maintenance of their families’ suffer hardships and often disproportionately bare ‘the burden of structural adjustment programmes and increasing income disparities.’³⁴⁸ Women workers earn about half that of their male counterparts and women form the majority of the groups classified as the ‘working poor’—landless labourers, small-scale farmers, cottage industry and domestic workers.³⁴⁹ Furthermore, poor infrastructure means that women, who are most disadvantaged in terms of physical mobility,³⁵⁰ have reduced levels of access to transport and markets, particularly in rural areas.³⁵¹

Slow macro-economic growth, persistent poverty and uneven infrastructure development have combined with traditional patriarchal values and attitudes to affect the status of women in Sri Lanka.³⁵² Women in Sri Lanka are respected, loved and praised when they conform to the ideals of the virtuous mother and dutiful wife, but girls are taught to see their fertility and menstruation as a state of impurity and a sign calling for her ‘responsibility to guard her virginity and her good name.’³⁵³ Women are recognised for the responsibilities they take on within the home, but are expected to step back and accept the leadership of their father, husband, brothers or even sons and are seen as vicious, callous, ungrateful and dangerous if they do not accept their

³⁴⁸ Swarana Jayaweera, ‘Gender Dimensions of Five Decades of Development in Sri Lanka’ in V J Kumara (ed), *Milestones to Independence*, Colombo: People’s Bank, 1999, pp 326-355, p 328.

³⁴⁹ Asian Development Bank, p 41.

³⁵⁰ See Vijita Fernando, ‘The Triple Burden: Gender Imbalances in Rural Transport’ in Centre for Women’s Research, *Gender, Ideology and Development in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: CENWOR, 2000, pp 79-87.

³⁵¹ Asian Development Bank, p 42.

³⁵² Asian Development Bank, pp 5-6.

³⁵³ Risseuw, p 133.

subordinate positions within their families and communities.³⁵⁴ While Sri Lanka has had female Presidents and Prime Ministers and women have had the rights to vote and be elected to Parliament since 1931, very few have been Ministers in areas other than in ‘conventional “feminine” areas such as health [and] social services’³⁵⁵ and currently only about 4% of parliamentarians are women. One reason listed for this situation is the ‘gendered norm for male leadership.’³⁵⁶

Despite a Gender Development Index of 0.738 in 2004,³⁵⁷ Sri Lanka scored only 0.276 in the Gender Empowerment Measure,³⁵⁸ which quantifies women’s achievements in terms of economic and political decision making power relative to men³⁵⁹ and looks at factors such as percentages of females who are members of parliament, senior officials and managers and professionals as well as income ratios.³⁶⁰ Women are of course not a homogenous entity in a nation, and in a country as diverse as Sri Lanka, women’s situations and life styles vary as a result of their ethnicity, location, religion, class and age.³⁶¹ Taking these factors into consideration, this chapter will apply the theories and practices of development discussed in the preceding chapters and apply them to Sri Lanka’s gendered development experience.

³⁵⁴ Risseuw, pp 135, 137.

³⁵⁵ Jayaweera, p 350.

³⁵⁶ Asian Development Bank, p 5.

³⁵⁷ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 218.

³⁵⁸ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 222.

³⁵⁹ UNDP and NCED, p 43.

³⁶⁰ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 221.

³⁶¹ Jayaweera, p 327.

4.1 Development and Women at the National Level

4.1.1 Healthcare, Education and Social Welfare

Over six decades of governmental commitment to social-welfare policies in Sri Lanka has resulted in human development levels that are relatively high when considering the country's income poverty figures.³⁶² The poverty reduction policies discussed in Chapter Three were all universally implemented which significantly promoted gender parity in access to healthcare and education. In recent developments, policy and legislative initiatives have been introduced to strengthen the government's response to gender issues. These initiatives include a Women's Rights Bill and the allocation of 10% of ministry budgets for women's programs as well as increasing maternity leave entitlements to assist women to juggle work and family life.³⁶³ These policies are in line with those advocated by GAD paradigm, which argues for the state to support women's roles through the provision of social welfare services.

The universal provision of free health services and food subsidies improved Sri Lanka's health indicators for both women and men but significant benefits were provided for women through maternal and child health initiatives.³⁶⁴ While women had lower life-expectancies in the first half of the twentieth century, this relationship was reversed by 1965³⁶⁵ and the 2002 figures showed Sri Lankan women live on

³⁶² Bhalla and Glewwe, p 35

³⁶³ Sumanasekera, p 2.

³⁶⁴ Asian Development Bank, p 7.

³⁶⁵ Jayaweera, p 339.

average six years longer than men.³⁶⁶ The structural adjustment policies of the 1980s saw reductions in social welfare spending including health and education, and regional disparities are significant despite being concealed in official statistics.³⁶⁷ Socio-economic and environmental factors such as poverty, deteriorating infrastructure, access to safe drinking water and sanitation are reasons for continuing problems with diseases such as malaria but there is no gender-based discrimination in access to health services in Sri Lanka.³⁶⁸

Sri Lanka society greatly values education, which is widely considered to be ‘an instrument of upward socioeconomic mobility.’³⁶⁹ Governments have been committed to universal public access to primary, secondary and tertiary education since independence, long before WID advocates highlighted the need for women to be educated in order to be more empowered in society.³⁷⁰ As a result, girls from most socio-economic backgrounds have access to schooling and in fact girls have slightly higher rates of school and university³⁷¹ enrolments than boys.³⁷² Furthermore, there is virtually no gender disparity in literacy levels of the population born after the implementation of these policies.³⁷³ However education services, particularly in rural areas, have been deteriorating recently due to budget constraints. Like problems with health care, difficulties that girls and boys face in regards to educational opportunities

³⁶⁶ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 218.

³⁶⁷ Asian Development Bank, p 6.

³⁶⁸ Jayaweera, p 340.

³⁶⁹ Asian Development Bank, p 7.

³⁷⁰ Rathgeber, p 491.

³⁷¹ United Nations, *Johannesburg Summit 2002: Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, p 107.

³⁷² UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 218; Sumanasekera, p 2.

³⁷³ Jayaweera, p 335.

are the result of Sri Lanka's economic problems and regional imbalances rather than gender disparities.³⁷⁴ Nevertheless it has been noted that 'equal access to education has not enabled women to enjoy equal access to employment, as reflected in the higher education levels of unemployed women relative to unemployed men',³⁷⁵ This has a lot to do with the nature of Sri Lanka's economy and women's roles in employment.

4.1.2 Macro-economic Development and Sri Lankan Women

In a reflection of the case at an international level, development policies had been in place on the national level in Sri Lanka since the 1950s but it was only in the 1970s that women's issues and roles in economic development were recognised.³⁷⁶ The subsequent drive to 'integrate women's development' resulted in increased international funding for such projects and the establishment of bureaucratic machinery for women's affairs.³⁷⁷ The Sri Lankan Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Social Welfare seeks to promote gender-equity

in all aspects of public and private life by focusing on the prime issues of discrimination by means of policies and strategies as through the implementation of development programs.³⁷⁸

However, the programs implemented in the 1970s and 1980s were based upon gender-role assumptions that saw women as mothers 'or at best secondary earners

³⁷⁴ Asian Development Bank, p 10; Jayaweera, p 333.

³⁷⁵ Asian Development Bank, p 8; Jayaweera, p 342.

³⁷⁶ Jayaweera, p 327.

³⁷⁷ Jayaweera, p 327.

³⁷⁸ Government of Sri Lanka, Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Social Welfare, Colombo, viewed 1 October 2005,

http://www.priu.gov.lk/Ministries/Min_womens_empower_social_welfare.html.

engaged in gender appropriate economic activities³⁷⁹ such as small-scale farming and handicrafts production. In this sense, WID thinking did not have a marked impact on national gender and development policies in Sri Lanka, although at the NGO level, as elaborated below, an integration of women into the cash-economy was the most-favoured poverty reduction approach.

Paid employment has become a chief method for women and their families to move out of poverty³⁸⁰ and the macroeconomic policies of successive Sri Lankan governments since independence has impacted the nature of women's work in the country. Women's roles as factory workers, plantation labour and migrant domestic workers have bolstered Sri Lanka's export-orientated economy.³⁸¹ The import-substitution policies of the 1970s created new opportunities for women in new industries such as plastics and ceramics and manufacturing jobs in the garment factories. These jobs, which were promoted by policy changes which encouraged export-oriented growth, have predominantly gone to female workers.³⁸²

The gender issues highlighted by these developments have been raised by neo-Marxist feminists who point out the exploitation of women in multinational factories³⁸³ which exist in Sri Lanka's free-trade zones. Around 90% of garment

³⁷⁹ Jayaweera, p 328.

³⁸⁰ Asian Development Bank, p 42.

³⁸¹ Asian Development Bank, p 16.

³⁸² Jayaweera, p 342.

³⁸³ See Lim, p223.

factory employees are female³⁸⁴ and despite the relative empowerment which comes from having a cash income, the nature of work in these factories often reinforces the subordination of women. They have no room for promotion from their semi-skilled, assembly-line production tasks, they work long-hours for the low wages which encouraged the establishment of these multinational industries and they are subject to occupational health hazards and job insecurity in an increasingly de-regulated labour environment of weak labour-law enforcement³⁸⁵ and restricted trade union activity.³⁸⁶

Another common practice in the garment industry is outsourcing to home-based workers, the majority of whom are again women. It is argued that this form of home-based work allows women to engage in wage income without neglecting their domestic responsibilities such as child care.³⁸⁷ However, this informal sector is completely out of the ambit of labour regulation and the exploitation of these women workers is pronounced.³⁸⁸ Through sub-contracting, the manufacturer is able to circumvent labour regulations as well as entitlements such as sick leave and overtime while the workers are required to outlay capital for equipment and machinery in order to complete their work.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁴ Lakshmi Godamunne Perera, 'Equality and Social Justice in the "Global Village": What Choice for Women – A View from Sri Lanka' in Centre for Women's Research, *Gender, Ideology and Development in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: CENWOR, 2000, pp 55-66, p 61.

³⁸⁵ Jayaweera, p 332.

³⁸⁶ Asian Development Bank, p 19.

³⁸⁷ Asian Development Bank, p 20.

³⁸⁸ Jayaweera, p 347.

³⁸⁹ Kuruppu, p 3.

Migrant workers are a major source of Sri Lanka's national income and the majority of Sri Lankans travelling overseas to work in garment factories or as housemaids are women.³⁹⁰ The state intervened in the 1990s to regulate the industry and protect these workers from harassment, exploitation and injustice and offer support in terms of advice, insurance and training.³⁹¹ However, this form of employment highlights the gendered trends in employment opportunities for largely educated and healthy Sri Lankan women.³⁹²

The disparities of income poverty between women in the urban and rural areas of Sri Lanka are pronounced.³⁹³ While structural changes and lack of opportunity have propelled some rural women to seek employment in garment factories and as domestic workers in urban areas or overseas,³⁹⁴ Jayaweera claims that '[c]ontrary to theories of displacement of women in the agriculture sector as a consequence of 'modernization'', rural women are still actively involved in agricultural activities and patterns of economic activity have not significantly changed.³⁹⁵

Concomitantly, when men moved to urban areas to seek alternative income, women become burdened with agricultural and income-generating work in addition to domestic responsibilities.³⁹⁶ Around 40% of agriculturally workers are women, but of

³⁹⁰ Asian Development Bank, p 21.

³⁹¹ Jayaweera, pp 348-349.

³⁹² See Asian Development Bank, p 18.

³⁹³ UNDP and NCED, p 21.

³⁹⁴ Asian Development Bank, p 18.

³⁹⁵ Jayaweera, p 343.

³⁹⁶ Kuruppu and Peris, p 7.

those, 70% undertake unpaid family tasks.³⁹⁷ Traditional industries which are dominated by women such as handloom weaving and coir processing continue to operate but these forms of industries lack the capacity to be competitive in the international market³⁹⁸ and these women are often unable to gain access to the Samurdhi enterprise support programs³⁹⁹ because their outputs are too small.⁴⁰⁰

4.2 Grassroots Women's Development in Sri Lanka

Since independence, Sri Lankan governments have attempted to drive development through specific social-welfare policies aimed at reducing poverty as well as through macro-economic policy geared towards increasing growth. While employment income is the chief method used by women to get themselves and their families out of poverty, economic policy has resulted in many women being disadvantaged in gaining employment, relegated to home-based work in the informal sector or engaged in tedious work which is exploitative and only magnifies gender subordination. In interviews, representatives from the three NGOs discussed in Chapter Three indicated that the need to provide women with alternatives to working in garment factories or

³⁹⁷ United Nations, *Johannesburg Summit 2002: Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, p 106.

³⁹⁸ Asian Development Bank, p 19.

³⁹⁹ United Nations, *Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/lanka-cp.htm>.

⁴⁰⁰ Asian Development Bank, p 23.

going overseas to be housemaids was the central reason their organisation's women's development projects were implemented.⁴⁰¹

4.2.1 Income Generation

While Government policy has mainly focused on macro-level development to stimulate economic growth, micro-enterprise development support for women in Sri Lanka is chiefly arranged through the collaboration of NGOs and commercial banks rather than through State programs such as Samurdhi.⁴⁰² In line with WID thinking, programs implemented by NGOs focus on enterprise and business development rather than welfare in order to promote women's economic empowerment.⁴⁰³

However, gender imbalances still exist for Sri Lankan small businesses with only 5% being owned or managed by women.⁴⁰⁴ Studies show that micro-credit and self-employment programs have often 'perpetuated poverty among the majority of low-income women'⁴⁰⁵ and that income-generation projects were ineffective as women often lack the capital and training support necessary to run successful small businesses.⁴⁰⁶

Despite these criticisms and limitations, income-generation programs—such as those supported by Sewalanka, Siyath and Sarvodaya—continue to be dominant in

⁴⁰¹ Kamala Peris, Siyath Foundation, interview with author, 20 June 2005; Kaushalya Nawaratne, Sewalanka Foundation, interview with author, 20 June 2005; Inoka Ranatunga, Sarvodaya Women's Movement, interview with author, 27 June 2005. See also L G Perera, pp 62ff.

⁴⁰² United Nations, *Johannesburg Summit 2002: Country Profile – Sri Lanka*, p 106.

⁴⁰³ Kuruppu and Peris, p 1.

⁴⁰⁴ Kuruppu and Peris, p 7.

⁴⁰⁵ Asian Development Bank, p 23.

⁴⁰⁶ Rathgeber, p 498.

development circles. Feminist scholars such as Bandarage⁴⁰⁷ argue that these micro-business projects are generally in the areas of traditional feminine industries such as food processing, handloom weaving, handicrafts, sewing and coir production and other cottage industries.⁴⁰⁸ However, regardless of how gendered these projects may be, the economic integration approach has often been successful in alleviating income-poverty for the particular Sri Lankan women who are involved. The programs implemented by Sewalanka and Sarvodaya challenge the criticism levelled at the ineffectiveness of income-generation projects. Upon realisation that facilitation and provision of information, guidance, counselling, skills development and marketing training are imperative for the success of small business ventures,⁴⁰⁹ both organisations have integrated entrepreneurial training and capacity building with their micro-credit loan schemes⁴¹⁰ with more effective results.⁴¹¹

While Sewalanka has a specific Women's Empowerment Project, Sarvodaya's Economic Enterprises Development Services (SEEDS) takes a gendered focus in its general developmental activities.⁴¹² Approximately 67% of SEEDS clients⁴¹³ and 86% of the participants in technical skills development programs⁴¹⁴ in the quarter to

⁴⁰⁷ Bandarage, p 503.

⁴⁰⁸ Sewalanka Foundation, *Social and Economic Empowerment of Women in the North and East of Sri Lanka*, Colombo: Sewalanka Women's Empowerment Program, 2003 (pamphlet); Ranatunga, interview with author, 27 June 2005; Bond, p 64.

⁴⁰⁹ Kuruppu and Peris, p 10.

⁴¹⁰ SEEDS, *A History of Development*, p 26; Sewalanka Foundation, *Annual Report 2002-2003*, p 4.

⁴¹¹ Kuruppu and Peris, p 4.

⁴¹² Dr Margaret Kuruppu, Director of Enterprise Services, SEEDS, interview with author, 27 June 2005.

⁴¹³ SEEDS, *Enterprise Services Division Quarterly Report 1 April 2005 – 31 June 2005*, Colombo: Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services, 2005 (available online http://www.seeds.lk/PDF/QPR_1_2005-06_ESD.pdf), p 1.

⁴¹⁴ SEEDS, *Enterprise Services Division Quarterly Report 1 April 2005 – 31 June 2005*, p 20.

31 June 2005 were women. Rural women who previously had no other economic opportunities in the formal sector accounted for 70-80% of entrepreneurs who generated income to support their families.⁴¹⁵ However, several studies of women's involvement with micro-finance through SEEDS have indicated that in several cases women applied for loans at the insistence of their husbands, who then appropriated the money for their own businesses,⁴¹⁶ and that loans and training were used by women for domestic purposes instead of enterprise development.⁴¹⁷

Home-based small businesses are a useful means for women to juggle domestic responsibilities with the task of generating income⁴¹⁸ as well as avoiding the risks of exploitation that come from engaging in sub-contracting with large-scale garment manufacturers.⁴¹⁹ However, women often need support in terms of obtaining credit to improve their businesses and market their products and the national economic crisis and factors such as drought and rising business costs affected the success of many micro businesses.⁴²⁰ These reasons highlight the need for women engaged in micro-enterprises to be supported with business advice and counselling⁴²¹ as well as to take part in collectives in order to be more effective in credit and marketing aspects of their ventures.

⁴¹⁵ Kuruppu and Peris, p 8.

⁴¹⁶ Kuruppu and Peris, p 6.

⁴¹⁷ Kuruppu and Peris, p 4.

⁴¹⁸ Kuruppu, p 4.

⁴¹⁹ Kuruppu, p 3.

⁴²⁰ Kuruppu and Peris, p 3.

⁴²¹ Kuruppu and Peris, p ii.

4.2.1 Participatory Development

Women have also significantly engaged with Siyath Foundation's participatory development approach in the coir processing industry in Sri Lanka, as detailed in Chapter Three. Within the context where individual women processed coir fibre for the local trader whose trading practices often left women trapped in debt, their involvement in collectives enabled them to buy raw materials at better prices, find more profitable means of distributing the processed products and taking out loans to further improve their enterprises.⁴²² The success of these initiatives have allowed women to 'come into their own in the public sphere of activity in the village, an area hitherto occupied solely by men [and have gained] respect from their male colleagues in other organizations.'⁴²³

Despite feminist critiques of participatory development,⁴²⁴ the approach appears to work fairly well in Sri Lanka where women's involvement in their communities is accepted. While there are gendered norms operating in Sri Lankan family values, women are often forced to take responsibility within villages where men have been lost as a result of the ethnic conflict⁴²⁵ or are unable to take on family responsibilities due to alcoholism.⁴²⁶ Women form the majority in around 75% of Sarvodaya's Shramadana Societies⁴²⁷ and the Sarvodaya Women's Movement undertakes

⁴²² Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 38.

⁴²³ Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 43.

⁴²⁴ See section 2.2.1 of this thesis.

⁴²⁵ Nawaratne, interview with author, 20 June 2005; Kuruppu and Peris, p 9.

⁴²⁶ Bianca Abeygoonawardane, Sarvodaya Children's Services, interview with author, 27 June 2005.

⁴²⁷ Kuruppu and Peris, p 9.

demand-centred development programs.⁴²⁸ The examples presented by Mosse's critique of participatory development, of women being excluded from or unable to participate,⁴²⁹ are not evident in the participatory development programs implemented by the NGOs examined in this thesis.

However, the criticisms of participatory development regarding gendered ideals and increasing women's burdens⁴³⁰ can be applied to these cases. The nature of the work performed by women as part of these poverty alleviation programs confines them within the feminine and domestic domain. Coir production, food processing, handloom weaving, handicrafts, sewing and other cottage industries are essentially feminine tasks and income-generation and development programs in these areas uphold traditional norms of women's domesticity.⁴³¹ Within impoverished families, women are also idealised in their commitment to the welfare of their children and the need to eradicate poverty. The tendency of Sri Lankan men in poorer communities to neglect their family responsibilities as a result of gambling or alcoholism is generally accepted as a common occurrence within society and becomes justification for women to take on almost all responsibilities for the family.⁴³²

However, the example of Siyath Foundation's participatory development work with women in the coir industry on the Southern coastal belt of Sri Lanka is interesting in

⁴²⁸ Ranatunga, interview with author, 27 June 2005.

⁴²⁹ Mosse, p 512.

⁴³⁰ Isserles, p 48.

⁴³¹ Hennayake, p 7.

⁴³² Abeygoonawardane, interview with author, 27 June 2005. See also *The Wrong End of the Rope*, documentary film, directed by Carla Risseuw and Amara Amarasinghe, Cinemien, Netherlands, undated.

that it is not a case of external forces imposing outside values and additional responsibilities upon already burdened women. Rather than encouraging new micro-enterprises such as cottage industries, Siyath's approach allows women coir-workers to improve their return from existing labour practices. The over-burdening and exploitation had already existed before the development process had been implemented, and the women involved had already been working in coir-production as well as their domestic responsibilities.⁴³³ By improving existing practices, this particular approach has actually assisted women coir-workers in balancing their dual roles because they are able to gain more from their productive activities and provide more for their families.

4.2.3 Community Development

As noted in Chapter Two, approaches to development and women must consider the dual reproductive and productive roles undertaken by women in their communities. Simply encouraging income-generation is inadequate, as highlighted by critics of WID thinking, because often women cannot deal with the burden of providing economic support for their families as well as looking after and raising children. The case of Sri Lanka is encouraging because the State has undertaken responsibility to provide social services such as healthcare and education to assist women and their families.⁴³⁴ In line with the GAD approach, NGOs also play a role ensuring that the

⁴³³ *The Wrong End of the Rope*.

⁴³⁴ Visavanthan, 'Introduction to Part 1', p 18.

community, at a national, local and kinship level, supports the emancipation of women and promotes their dual roles as mothers and economic contributors.⁴³⁵

Setting up a pre-school is one of the first major projects of Sarvodaya's community empowerment program and subsequently Mother's Groups are built around this service. Through these groups, Sarvodaya provides basic healthcare and nutrition information, home economics training and support for home gardening.⁴³⁶ Parental education programs are implemented and involve mothers and fathers because of the recognition that men also need to play a role in the growth of their families, but the empowerment of mothers is foregrounded as economic dependence on men is often a problem in poorer communities.⁴³⁷ Women from the community are also hired and trained to be teachers at the pre-school and community health workers, thereby providing them with employment opportunities which would otherwise be unavailable to them.⁴³⁸

4.3 Conclusion

Many aspects of the case of women's development in Sri Lanka highlight the continued dominance of liberal development thinking and practice. At the national level, macro-economic development policies in Sri Lanka have focused on gearing

⁴³⁵ Young, p 53.

⁴³⁶ Bond, p 22.

⁴³⁷ Abeygoonawardane, interview with author, 27 June 2005.

⁴³⁸ Bond, p 22.

the national economy towards export-orientated growth but have not assisted in promoting the development of women. While the development of new industries brought new opportunities for employment, work for women in multinational manufacturing factories exemplifies gender-subordination as well as capitalist exploitation.⁴³⁹ Overseas domestic work may bring substantial financial rewards but at the expense of women's capacities to be part of their families and communities.

Even grassroots programs aimed at providing women with alternatives to these forms of exploitative and subordinating employment emphasise enterprise development and integration into the capitalist economy in order to gain self-reliance and promote poverty alleviation. However, participatory development programs which operate within an economic framework dominated by neo-liberal ideology have benefited Sri Lankan women despite criticism that this approach disadvantages women from actually participating.⁴⁴⁰ This positive outcomes can be ascribed the fact women in Sri Lanka are generally more socially empowered than other developing countries. Women have always been active in economic as well as domestic responsibilities, particularly in agriculture and industries such as coir production.⁴⁴¹ Collective action has also enabled women to empower themselves and gain respect from their male peers, despite cultural norms.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁹ See Lim, p223.

⁴⁴⁰ Mosse, p 512.

⁴⁴¹ Jayaweera, p 341.

⁴⁴² Peris, *Weaving a Future Together*, p 43.

The Sri Lankan case shows the effectiveness of state intervention in providing social services to support women's development as advocated by the GAD paradigm. The provision of universal education and healthcare has ensured gender parity in literacy and quality of life indicators, although the provision and quality of these services are suffering due to budgetary constraints. Where state intervention has been inadequate, NGOs such as Sarvodaya have provided community support for women to undertake their reproductive and productive roles simultaneously. There is still a fair way to go before women's development in Sri Lanka is successful in totality, but of course there continues to be debate over what successful development ultimately is.

Conclusion

5.1 The Dilemmas of Development

From its beginnings in the post World War II reconstruction era, development has become a global industry.⁴⁴³ As well as being a significant field of academic discourse, international development is a massive socio-political phenomenon which has grown over half a century. This thesis has sought to examine the relationship between international development theory and the practical effects of development processes upon women in Sri Lanka. This study began by exploring the concept of ‘development’ as well as the various surrounding theories and their contribution to the realisation of development policy and practice.

The traditional orthodox liberal paradigm of development, which was dominant in the 1950’s and 1960s, argues that national economic growth is the key to combating poverty. This approach recommends that poorer countries must alter the structure of their economies, namely through industrialisation.⁴⁴⁴ Economic development and growth in national incomes promotes increased investment and consumption, and thus improves standards of living.⁴⁴⁵ The liberal economic paradigm operates

⁴⁴³ See David Ransom, ‘The Big Charity Bonanza’, *New Internationalist*, NI 383, October 2005, pp 2-5.

⁴⁴⁴ Todaro, p 14.

⁴⁴⁵ Hope, p3.

concurrently with the modernisation theory, which aims to correct the failure of Western-style economic growth models in non-Western countries by essentially ‘Westernising’ them.⁴⁴⁶ Modernisation theory proposes that the replication of successful growth as seen in modern, developed nations can be achieved when poor countries with traditional economic structures make the transition to become modern industrialised societies.⁴⁴⁷

The failure of traditional liberal economic development theory and the ‘trickle down’ approach led to the formulation of alternative approaches. Critiques of orthodox development theory such as neo-Marxist dependency theory highlight that the problem of underdevelopment is a result of the nature of the liberal-capitalist international system.⁴⁴⁸ Participatory development calls for the need to prevent ‘development from degenerating into a bureaucratic, top-down and dependency creating institution.’⁴⁴⁹ These critiques also support the need to promote human development which directly improves the lives of people living in poverty.⁴⁵⁰

A key observation to be drawn from examining development theory and practice is the shift from grand proposals for macro-economic growth in poorer countries to small-scale projects aimed at poverty-alleviation which directly assist the poor. These observations can be seen in the case of Sri Lanka’s development experience as

⁴⁴⁶ Mehmet.

⁴⁴⁷ Jaffee, pp 109-110; Hulme and Turner, p 38; Mehmet, p 68.

⁴⁴⁸ Hulme and Turner, p 48.

⁴⁴⁹ Rahnema, p 121.

⁴⁵⁰ Chambers, pp 961-562.

discussed in Chapter Three. Initially, orthodox liberal approaches influenced Sri Lankan macroeconomic policies which sought to increase national income through international trade. The limited success of economic growth policies in isolation highlighted the need for ‘asset redistribution and provision of basic services’,⁴⁵¹ as well as small-scale development projects supported at the national and NGO level in order to directly achieve poverty-alleviation goals. Specific policies such as the provision universal healthcare delivery and education have resulted in higher human development indicators relative to national income levels.⁴⁵²

After half a century of debate on development theories, the emergence of the ‘post-development’ school highlights the frustrations which exist with the concept itself. This approach rejects the concept of development, arguing that ‘the negative consequences which have been observed to result from development are intrinsic to the process rather than being unintentional side effects of it.’⁴⁵³ Post-development highlights the negative effects of relativism and comparisons which arise from the concept. Furthermore, the entrenchment of ethnocentric and colonial values within the discourse of development is portrayed as perpetuating hierarchies of power and difference rather than rectifying them.⁴⁵⁴

Development is currently suffering from a dilemma. With the renewed momentum gained by the UN’s Millennium Development Project and global campaigns such as

⁴⁵¹ Asian Development Bank, p 41.

⁴⁵² Bhalla and Glewwe, p 35; see also UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 140.

⁴⁵³ Matthews.

⁴⁵⁴ Parpart, p 253.

Make Poverty History,⁴⁵⁵ the concept of development is firmly entrenched as part of the international politics. The problem is that the processes which are in place to achieve these goals are essentially the same ones which have failed for over half a century. In particular, the dominance of the neo-liberal paradigm in international politics continues to promote practices such as integration of the global market, trade liberalisation and the international division of labour⁴⁵⁶—processes which have clearly failed to bring about positive social change in poor countries over the decades. Post-development argues for ‘development’ to be done away with, but it appears that this concept and its processes are here to stay. And it may be a long time before it is no longer required to exist.

5.2 Feminist Development: Problems with Theory and Practice

Chapter Two of this thesis highlighted the emergence of feminist approaches to development from the recognition that mainstream development thinking and practice had effectively neglected the roles of women. Like mainstream development thinking, the feminist paradigms of development were debated and reformulated in response to their limited success in practice.

⁴⁵⁵ See Oxfam’s website for this campaign: www.makepovertyhistory.org.

⁴⁵⁶ Blomstrom and Hettne, p 15; Gilpin, p 266.

The liberal-feminist Women in Development paradigm promotes the integration of women within existing social structures and ideas of modernisation and economic growth.⁴⁵⁷ This approach continues to be dominant in development circles as a result of the prevalence of neo-liberal ideology.⁴⁵⁸ While WID thinking concludes that modernisation occurs concurrently with women's subordination, it assumes this is the result of approaches to reach development goals which exclude women rather than the result of the questioning the modernisation process itself. The Marxist-feminist Women and Development approach calls for the overhaul of the unfair international capitalist system in line with mainstream dependency theory. However, both approaches have been criticised for failing to adequately address the need for women to balance their economic and social roles as producers and reproducers.⁴⁵⁹

The Gender and Development school emerged as a social-feminist critique to modernisation theory and argues that the state and wider community must assist in balancing women's dual roles, through the provision of social services and support.⁴⁶⁰ However, both governments and development institutions have been reluctant to support the sweeping structural changes advocated by this paradigm.⁴⁶¹

The central issue regarding the debate on feminist development is balancing women's complex socio-economic roles within the process of poverty alleviation. WID

⁴⁵⁷ Rathgeber, p 491.

⁴⁵⁸ See Koczberski, p 396.

⁴⁵⁹ Visavanthan, 'Introduction to Part 1', p 19.

⁴⁶⁰ Young, p 53.

⁴⁶¹ Rathgeber, p 495.

projects promote the integration of women into the capitalist economy through enterprise development and income-generation as the most effective way to encourage women's economic—and therefore social—empowerment. Small home-based businesses can allow women to juggle domestic responsibilities while generating income to support their families,⁴⁶² but in reality this approach can burden women with the tasks of poverty alleviation and caring for their families.⁴⁶³ Furthermore, these businesses tend to be in gendered industries such as food-production and handicrafts which have the effect of restricting women within traditional gender roles and the domestic sphere.⁴⁶⁴ Participatory development practices also come under scrutiny by feminist critiques which highlight that women are often unable to meaningfully participate because of the demanding nature of their domestic responsibilities and social factors such as the exclusion of women from the public sphere.⁴⁶⁵

The concept of development is surrounded by great deals of debate. Every theory is criticised and challenged from every angle and while this can be constructive in order to improve theories and practices, it is important to note this can also result in the ideas being stuck in a quagmire of academic argument as people in poorer countries continue to be disadvantaged. After outlining the debate, this thesis has attempted to ask: despite the many ideas, theories, debates and criticisms, has any of this actually helped poor women in Sri Lanka?

⁴⁶² Kuruppu, p 4.

⁴⁶³ Isserles, p 48.

⁴⁶⁴ Bandarage, p 503.

⁴⁶⁵ Mosse, p 512.

5.3 Development, Women, Sri Lanka: What Works, What Doesn't, What Now?

Mainstream women-focused development in Sri Lanka has promoted income-generation as the main poverty-alleviation tactic. This process stays within the framework of liberal capitalism which is so firmly entrenched in the international system. However, there has also been the recognition of the need for social support and the provision of social services in order to achieve meaningful development. It is important to note that Sri Lanka's macro-economic policies, which aim to increase national income within the global capitalist system, continue to result in minimal growth and provide exploitative avenues for women's employment. On the other hand, social policies have presented significant improvements in human development indicators.⁴⁶⁶

The universal application of poverty reduction policies such as free education, healthcare and nutrition programs have ensured gender parity in human development in Sri Lanka.⁴⁶⁷ These and additional policies such as increasing maternity leave entitlements⁴⁶⁸ are in-line with GAD approaches where the state supports women's roles through the provision of social welfare services. However, the continued delivery of these services has been negatively affected by the external economic problems in Sri Lanka. In this situation where state intervention to support women through the provision of social services has been inadequate, NGO involvement has

⁴⁶⁶ Bhalla and Glewwe, p 35; see also UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004*, p 140.

⁴⁶⁷ Jayaweera, p 326.

⁴⁶⁸ Sumanasekera, p 2.

played a part in providing community support for the emancipation of women and promotion of their dual roles as mothers and economic contributors.⁴⁶⁹ An example of this is Sarvodaya's community development processes.

The integration of women into the cash-economy is the most prevalent poverty-alleviation approach in Sri Lanka. Upon the re-structuring of the national economy to favour export-oriented growth, paid employment as factory workers, plantation labour and migrant domestic workers has been the key way in which women can move themselves and their family out of poverty.⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless, these employment opportunities are often exploitative and magnify gender subordination,⁴⁷¹ indicating the need for more alternative forms of income-generation and poverty alleviation programs for women. These programs are generally micro-financed small-business projects such as food production and handicrafts⁴⁷² which allow women to generate income working from home while still being able to fulfil their domestic responsibilities.

These types of projects which are supported by NGOs such as Sarvodaya and Sewalanka have come under criticism,⁴⁷³ as discussed above. However, problems relating to the failure of small businesses and non-payments of loans have been overcome by the holistic approaches of these projects including business skills

⁴⁶⁹ Young, p 53.

⁴⁷⁰ Asian Development Bank, p 42.

⁴⁷¹ Bandarage, p 503.

⁴⁷² Sewalanka Foundation, *Social and Economic Empowerment of Women in the North and East of Sri Lanka*.

⁴⁷³ See Chapter 2: section 2.2.1 Women and Income Generation.

training in order to achieve more successful results.⁴⁷⁴ Furthermore, the criticisms regarding women's social inability to meaningfully participate in community development initiatives are essentially not applicable to the projects examined because of the fact that women's involvement in the economic activities in their communities is generally accepted within Sri Lankan society.⁴⁷⁵

Criticisms regarding the tendency of income-generation projects to confine women to the domestic sphere and increase the burden of women's responsibilities are, however, applicable. While these criticisms advocate sweeping social changes which are unlikely to occur in the near future, the projects examined work within the structures of capitalism and gendered norms to at least achieve a small—yet still meaningful—amount of progress. The key example is Siyath's work with women coir workers in Sri Lanka. This approach assisted women to reduce existing burdens by improving existing practices rather than imposing additional responsibilities. Women are continually going to struggle with their roles as producers and carers. Until significant changes to values and attitudes regarding gender roles occur, processes which can make women's lives just a little better should be considered successes.

⁴⁷⁴ Kuruppu and Peris, p 4.

⁴⁷⁵ Jayaweera, p 340.

5.4 The Final Word

Development is a phenomenon which can only be achieved once the need for it is eradicated.⁴⁷⁶ Over half a century after the idea of development came became a key element in the international arena, it is facing a crisis. If the goals of development have not been achieved already then it is not a forgone conclusion to say they can be achieved in the next fifty years if the same ideas and values continue to be recirculated. Within the scope of this study, it can be concluded that if holistic approaches are pragmatically applied within the constraints of social structures which are unlikely to change, small successes may be achieved.

Finding a balance between the main opposing viewpoints on development—increasing economic growth to allow the market to provide improvements in living standards or direct government intervention with the provision welfare to ensure equitable distribution⁴⁷⁷—may be a sensible path. The case of Sri Lanka shows that the provision of basic welfare services can promote human development where economic benefits do not trickle down. Nevertheless, the international community still needs to critically assess why complete success in reducing poverty has not yet been achieved in Sri Lanka (and other less-developed countries) and agree on how to do so. Until significant social and structural changes occur, small projects can work within the existing system to make the lives of people living in poverty a little easier. Basic improvements can be made to people's lives by moving beyond the simple

⁴⁷⁶ See Esteva, p 6.

⁴⁷⁷ Bhalla and Glewwe, p 36.

dichotomies of claims advocating macro-economic structural change or calling for the complete reconsideration of 'development'.

This pragmatic approach also applies to the dilemma facing women as they attempt to balance their roles as mothers and earners. It will be a long time before sweeping reconsiderations of gender roles as advocated by theorists are actualised. In the meantime, the slightest possibility of making women's lives even just a little easier should be embraced. The results may not be perfect, but a small improvement is still an infinite times better than nothing.

Meanwhile, the search for the perfect solution to the problems of poverty and gender-roles continues...

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