

What is Development ?

The concept of Development is appearing more and more in the feminist literature. Integration of women in the development process is now considered an essential first step toward their liberation, an important element in national build-up and a necessary prerequisite to the fulfillment of world needs. The call for women's participation in development has received special emphasis in UNO publications, in the World Plan of Action and in the Program for Women's Employment for Equality, Development and Peace.

Yet the process of development itself has been little discussed or explained. What do we mean by development? What preliminary steps should be taken to ensure its success? Is it possible for a woman to participate in it without previous preparation?

In a message based on experience in the field of world cooperation and sharing, Canadian President Marcel Massé tries to answer those questions. He notes that in the early days of cooperation, development meant something tangible, like founding a new school, or erecting a dam or a bridge. Over the past three decades, a profound change has taken place: development is no longer thought of in material terms but rather as a qualitative change in the way people think, act and relate to their environment. It was once assumed that a sufficient influx of capital investment would make people succeed. Now we know that money is not enough. Third World nations are short of human resources. They lack people trained to create and run the systems, institutions and machines that have invaded their countries.

Another prerequisite for the success of development is an understanding of people's background, of their cultural heritage, which would make possible the adaptation and harmonization of the new with the old.

The few studies that have been made on women's status and background in the Arab world are weak. A critical study of recent research on women and children in Egypt, as summarized in this issue of **Al-Raida**, reveals important defects in methodology and conclusions.

As Mr. Massé, taking into account the cultural roots of development, points out, growth for growth's sake must give way to a deepening awareness of the social dimension which in turn leads to a more complete vision. "The essence of development is people"; development demands greater participation of the people themselves in the life of their own nation. In understanding other cultures, Westerners will become aware of the relativity of their own values and culture. "In this sense, development is a two-way street. It changes and challenges Western experts as it does the citizens of the Third World". It is up to the latter to provide the former with ample and accurate information about themselves and their cultural heritage.