



Development in Latin America from a Gender Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Development must be looked at within the context of a major set of problems which despite differences in scope and magnitude are similar in most of the developing world. Worldwide, gender inequality finds expression in the lack of opportunities and support women have to carry out the kind of life they have good reasons to value. Gender inequality is one among many issues that need to be addressed in understanding development and underdevelopment. After a long period of neglect, the two last decades rendered a vast range of literature on all areas of development creating an unprecedented awareness about the importance of gender analysis in this field. The central notion is that the degree of human development of a given country is closely related to the way the country treats women.

Governance processes – with their emphasis on principles of accountability, transparency, responsiveness and inclusiveness – should be a means to social transformation. But despite this potential, they are failing to deliver on gender equality, and women are having to struggle to get their voices heard and needs met. It is necessary to map out persistent obstacles to gender equality in governance and deliver possible ways to promote gender balance in positions of authority, and building political will for change.

The aim of the course is to provide students with an in-depth understanding of the links between development and gender relations, and to show how equal relations between women and men is both an end and a means of development. The analysis is grounded on Latin America but looks into domestic approaches and policies as well as trends in the international arena, fundamental in today's globalized scenario.

OBJECTIVES

1. Introduce students to the values and principles of development by exploring the links between gender equality and development.
2. Discuss the main approaches concerning women's issues and gender equality in development and their implications on Latin American women.
3. Provide students with an understanding of development challenges in Latin America and how gender relations must be taken into account in designing public policies and strategies.
4. Analyze the demands, responses, and proposals of Latin American women to development strategies currently implemented in the region.



CONTENTS

UNIT I: APPROACHES TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER RELATIONS (4 sessions)

Feminist theorising has flourished in the last two decades. In this context, conceptual frameworks and competing approaches to the development process must be assessed and useful analytical categories for the evaluation of public policies need to be understood.

- Feminist theories and concepts for the understanding of gender relations
- History of women's participation in social struggles for gender equality: the case of Latin America
- World Conferences for Women
- Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action

UNIT II: VALUES AND PRINCIPLES IN DEVELOPMENT THOUGHT (5 sessions)

Development goes beyond economic growth. It must be aimed at enhancing individual opportunities and freedoms. The pioneer work of Amartya Sen raises the importance of grounding development strategies in the value of justice and thus, issues of equality become a priority in development thinking and strategizing. This approach offers new trends to explore in development thought.

This unit discusses the values and principles that lie under the idea of development and gender equality. The analysis is meant to clarify the ethical grounds for including a gender analysis to economic, social, and political concerns.

- Universality and specificity of women's rights
- The human development index (HDI), the human development index including gender (GDI), and the gender empowerment measure (GEM): the case of Latin America
- Gender indicators to measure the state of development in a country
- Gender gaps: The Global Gender Gap Report
- The public/private spheres debate

UNIT III: CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER RELATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA (4 sessions)

By the turn of the new century it had become clear that Latin America had not met the development goals set over the past two decades. The results have fallen short in terms of growth, poverty alleviation, democratization, and security to name some of the most pressing issues the region has not



been able to solve as desired. Rather than the prevailing optimism of some years ago, today the region faces an unpredictable future that demands the creative thinking of development planners and practitioners. Gender equality is at the core of all these challenges. Growth requires an active and equal involvement of women in the labour force, doing business, participating in decision-making processes at national and local levels. In striving for peace between men and women, between groups and nations in struggle, women's voices have grown stronger and offer a new understanding of conflicts and violence.

- Expressions of gender inequalities in Costa Rica and their implication for development:
 - The family
 - Labour market
 - Violence against women
 - Sexual and reproductive rights
 - Political participation of women

UNIT IV: PUBLIC POLICIES, INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND WOMEN'S DEMANDS IN LATIN AMERICA (2 sessions)

The status of public policies for gender equality is the core of this last unit. The objective is to look at the advances made in Latin America especially during the last two decades, to assess the results, and to draw recommendations for policy and action.

- National mechanism for the advancement of women
- Public policies for gender equality
- Women's organizations in Costa Rica and their demands
- Challenges in public policies for gender equality

METHODOLOGY

Topics will be introduced by the instructors or specialists (guest speakers) with background in the subject. During the semester there will be group discussion, class group work, homework, in-class debates, student oral presentations, site visits, and research work.

Students will present one reading during the semester and lead the discussion in the class. Reading and active class participation is encouraged. First part of the class will be dedicated to presentations and the second part will include videos, debates, discussion of newspaper articles and clips, etc. Students are encouraged to approach reality from a critical standpoint by means of participatory activities and the analysis of case studies. Students are expected to conduct research on a field of interest and to resort to local specialists and knowledge as a means of looking at them from the Latin American reality.



EVALUATION

Attendance, classwork and discussion*	10%
Oral presentation of one reading assignment	10%
Written one-page report on one of the readings (except the reading the student presented in class)	10%
Written report on programme and course site visit (2)	10%
Analysis of local newspaper clips on selected topics	10%
Quizzes (2)	10%
One case study on assigned topic	15%
Final exam	25%
TOTAL	100%

* (It includes class attendance and participation, as well as attendance to two program plenary sessions, and the participation in the main program field trip)

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