

STOCK TAKING AT MID POINT IN THE DECADE FOR WOMEN

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We are now at the beginning of two vital time periods of this century: the new development decade of the 1980s and the second half of the Decade for Women. It is a time when the phrase "women and development" has taken on new importance and urgency.

Development needs women to be active in the task of building and rebuilding, of structuring and restructuring, as agents of change and improvement. Development needs that half of the world's population who are so specially skilled in the art of surviving between the statistics, beneath the technology, annexed at the end of development plans. But deve-

lopment also needs women as beneficiaries for only when the other half of humanity begins to reap the benefits of improvement and change will the full potential of our human resources be released.

At this, the mid-point in the Decade for Women it is time to take stock of what has been achieved so far, to measure our progress against the World Plan of Action, to identify the reasons why we have fallen short in some areas, and to work out practical, action-oriented strategies for the remaining five years.....

..... We have been gathering material from all parts of the world, from governments, United Nations agencies, academic and research sources, about the condition of women, and on this we will base the evaluation.

And the picture is emerging. Starkly put, the situation of women in the world in 1980 is deteriorating. Equality, development and peace — the triple goals of the Decade—are not within view. In some places they are dreams that are receding into memory.

But the situation is not without hope. Since International Women's Year Mexico Conference in 1975 first brought the aspirations of women to the attention of the international community, there has been a growing understanding that women cannot continue to be regarded as a 'special group' outside the mainstream of the world's concerns and without a voice in the decisions of the world's strategies. Women are not content to be less than half. All over the world, in developed as in developing countries, in the North as well as in the South, women no longer accept the position of object or subject; they are ready to demand their rights as constituents. Networks of communication have been established and a new constituency very largely of women is beginning to emerge.

We are on the threshold of a new possibility — the possibility of a world where the decisions taken in the interests of the world's people are taken by representatives of all the world's people.