

LETTER TO OUR READERS

It seems as if everyone is talking about sustainable development these days, especially since the Earth Summit and Global Forum on Environment in June 1992 where the close connection between environment and sustainable development was emphasized.

What is the meaning of sustainable development? How is the concept used by different people and groups? What are women's visions of sustainable development?

One of the frequently used definitions of sustainable development is that presented in the 1987 report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*: "Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs...Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for a better life." However, the Commission saw economic growth as the fundamental condition for sustainable development. It stated: "If large parts of the developing world are to avert economic, social and environmental catastrophes, it is essential that global economic growth be revitalized. In practical terms it means more rapid economic growth in both industrial and developing countries."

Women have been challenging this concept of development for years. What are women's visions of sustainable development? This issue of **Women in Action** brings together the analyses, perspectives and visions of women from different parts of the world. In the opening article Kamla Bhasin speaks about her vision of sustainable development which, like a tree, grows from below upwards. Other articles bring views of women and groups from both the South and the North -- sustainable development is an issue that links women around the world and one that women are tackling on a global level.

Are women's visions of sustainable development too idealistic, impractical, utopian? This issue looks at how women are putting sustainable development visions and strategies into practice. Kamla Bhasin, in her article, stresses the importance of all of us carrying out our small experiments in sustainable development. The important thing is not to do this in isolation but to network, so that these little drops will flow together into a stream and these streams into a bigger stream.

This issue of **Women in Action** is a contribution to the flowing together of women's many experiences of sustainable development around the world, and to the flowing together of our visions and strategies as well. We hope that this will promote further analysis and the continued development of strategies for sustainable development -- at the macro level as well as at the micro level and ultimately contribute to the empowerment of women.

We would like to thank Kamla Bhasin for the key role she played in the conceptualization and putting together of this issue. Sustainable development is an issue that will be with us for a long time to come. Please send us your feedback.

Isis International Manila Collective