

## Chapter 3: Category LDC: acts of administration

This chapter explores the technology of knowledge of classification through the administration of the criteria used to determine category LDC. The chapter draws on close readings of over twenty years of records of meetings of the United Nations Committee for Development Planning, now known as the Committee for Development Policy (UNCDP) 1981- 2004. The chapter begins by locating the LDC category as a product of the institutional discourse of the UN, based within the gendered liberal humanism associated with the formation of the UN and the emergence of the discourse of development in the post-Second World War era where former colonies became independent. The LDC category and the UNCDP are thus located as discursive products of the UN, like the prolific declarations, resolutions, organisations, agencies, international plans, categories and so on, linked as products and vehicles for reproduction of development discourse. The chapter then conducts a survey of the representation of women in the assessments of LDC criteria, context and issues undertaken by the UNCDP. The chapter concludes with a close assessment of the UNCDP's administrative processes in assessing, applying and reviewing LDC criteria, assessing countries for inclusion and graduation from the LDC group.

I argue that this technology of knowledge operates within development discourse by defining and creating specialised information for the administration of the LDC category. Gender analysis reveals the limits of the conceptual underpinnings of the LDC criteria and the specialised information required for the administration of the category. Readings of the primary source material show that the gender bias in the Committee's operations is not addressed; particularly as the LDC criteria and their application become an increasingly important focus of the Committee's work. Throughout the discussion, I argue that the gendered assumptions and limits at the core of this technology of knowledge mean that gender is always in the discursive position of marginal relevance.

### ***Acts of definition***

Other people define us to be poor.

*Intervention from a delegate from Vanuatu during a plenary session at the NGO Forum on Least Developed Countries, Brussels 2001.*

But why even use "Third World", a somewhat problematic term which many now consider outdated? And why make an argument which privileges the social location, experiences, and identities of Third-World women workers, as opposed to any other group of workers, male or female? Certainly, there are problems with the term "Third World." It is inadequate in comprehensively characterizing the economic, political, racial and

cultural differences within the borders of Third-World nations. But in comparison with other similar formulations like “North/South” and “advanced/underdeveloped nations”, “Third World” retains a certain heuristic value and explanatory specificity in relation to the inheritance of colonialism and contemporary neocolonial economic and geopolitical processes that the other formulations lack.  
(Mohanty 1997:7)

The creation of the category Least Developed Country by the United Nations is as a product of the UN’s discourse of liberal humanism and development. This act of definition, of discursive production of a new category in 1971, is a result of assumptions about development, and the discursive need to assist the ‘family of nations’. The idea of the family of nations, this liberal humanism, and the development discourse emergent at the same time, is based on fundamentally gendered assumptions about who is in the family. Hyndman argues the UN’s liberal humanism is a product of the reaction against the atrocities of the Second World War, which was supported by the discrediting of racist so-called scientific theories of racial differences and supremacy:

Authorised by science, the ‘birth’ of a universal subject was timely. Poised between the victory over fascism and the horror of the Holocaust, the politically significant emergence of the ‘united family of man’ was legitimized by evolutionary biology and physical anthropology. The rallying point for humanists was that the scientific differences among individuals of the same so-called ‘race’ were greater than those among different ‘races’, the political corollary of which was the ‘birth of UN humanism’ and its attendant declarations, legislation, and human rights instruments which shape the humanitarian terrain today.  
(Hyndman 1998: 247)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaimed the rights of ‘universal man’, based on an equal brotherhood of men and nations, enshrined this gendered approach. As this discourse of liberal humanism was informing and forming the creation of the United Nations, the need to address poverty in all nations was becoming similarly significant as the UN produced and reproduced a new discourse of development.

In the opening of his seminal 1995 text *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Arturo Escobar cites Truman’s 1949 presidential address that outlined his doctrine, and approach to global poverty and development. This provides a clear, powerful post Second World War referent for the emergence and consolidation of ‘development’ as a hegemonic discourse:

More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate, they are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people... I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life... What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing... Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And

key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge.

(Truman [1949] 1964 cited in Escobar 1995:3)

Escobar then demonstrates the prominence swiftly reached by 'development' as discourse with a quotation from a 1951 meeting of the newly formed United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs convened to elaborate 'Measures for the Economic Development of Underdeveloped Countries':

There is a sense in which rapid economic progress is impossible without painful adjustments. Ancient philosophies have to be scrapped; old social institutions have to disintegrate; bonds of caste, creed and race have to burst; and large numbers of persons who cannot keep up with progress have to have their expectations of a comfortable life frustrated. Very few communities are willing to pay the full price of economic progress.

(United Nations 1951 cited in Escobar 1995:4)

This idealized process and perspective is enshrined by Lerner in his account of social change in Balgat village, Turkey as an aspirational tale of the benefits of modernisation and development (Lerner [1958] 2002). The modernisation theory of the 1950's (Rostow 1963) discussed previously in Chapter 1 was dominant at this time and became well entrenched in the development approach of the United Nations (de Senarclens [1988] 1997).

The emergence and consolidation of development as discourse within the United Nations system occurred as the body gradually became a stronger forum for former colonies and newly independent states to exercise international influence. With these shifts in the United Nations, 'development' discourse shifted from being the doctrine of a white president of the United States of America, and a group of international experts reporting to a body politically dominated by the USA, to become a mechanism to mobilize for political advantage, redress and assistance.

When the UN was founded in 1945 it had fifty-one members, each represented in the General Assembly. Today the membership is 159. (sic) Virtually all of the states admitted after 1956 are newly independent states. Before 1957, the membership was such that the United States could count on being in the majority on virtually every issue. But the new membership deprived the United States of that certainty.

(Jones 1988:601)

With this growth in membership and change in membership composition, the UN then became a forum for the production of contested discourses of development through the diplomatic pressure exercised by these newly independent former colonial countries. Part of this dynamic saw issues of development shift from the approach Escobar documents above, to put it crudely 'they need to drop the old and come in with our new' analysis, to one which by the 1970s adopted a much stronger analysis of international political economy and advocated preferential international terms of trade, amongst other issues. The discursive acts of definition that produced the LDC category occurred within this context of increased efforts within the UN to create international initiatives that could address poverty and promote economic and social development. As Cooper and Packard (1997) state, development as a concept was attractive to both the newly independent countries, and their former colonizers:

Unlike the earlier claims of Europe to inherent superiority or a 'civilising mission,' the notion of development appealed as much to leaders of

‘underdeveloped’ societies as to the people of developed countries, and it gave citizens in both categories a share in the intellectual universe and in the moral community that grew up around the world-wide development initiative of the post-World War II era.

(Cooper and Packard 1997:1)

Certainly this observation of the productive discursive power is reflected in the later discussion in this chapter which looks at some records of the UN Committee for Development Planning (UNCDP) debates when countries are resisting leaving the category when it has been identified that the socio-economic conditions have improved to the point where, according to the application of definitions, they are no longer amongst the LDCs.

So, it is at the time that newly independent states within the United Nations General Assembly are flexing their political will and strength that the first United Nations Decade of Development was established (in 1961), the United Nations Committee for Development Planning (UNCDP) was formed (in 1965) and the concept of the ‘Least Developed Country’ or LDC was defined and adopted (in 1971). The purpose of this category was to identify a group of countries that were, on a number of economic and social indicators, the poorest in the world, with the aim of formulating specific development policy addressed to their specific circumstances. The term ‘Least Developed Country’ is associated with the terms the ‘third world’, the ‘underdeveloped’, and the global ‘South’. A critical charge levied against the latter terms is their lack of specificity, the ease with which they define all which is not ‘the West’, ‘advanced’, ‘the North’ into a global homogenous other, an ‘other’ characterised variously by its poverty, need, suffering and struggle, conflict, corruption, oppression and disadvantage (Cowan and Shenton 1996; Escobar 1995; Hall 1992; Mohanty 1991) <sup>26</sup>. Within this contestation, the category LDC provides some definitional clarity. It now refers to a specific group of 50 countries who have defined themselves and been defined by the United Nations as the nations that are, according to a specific set of criteria, the poorest, least advantaged countries of the world.

The term LDC operates within the discourses of development to provide an imperative to action, for international, intergovernmental, and non-governmental agencies, and national aid and development programmes, challenging them all to focus their efforts on the poorest of the poor. The term ‘third world’ leads to charges of homogeneity, of a discursive construction that locates, defines, constrains, excludes and preconceives, based in a set of values that are produced by and reproduce Eurocentric, patriarchal, racist, colonialist and imperialist

---

<sup>26</sup> The use of these terms leads to significant reflection on the part of theorists who wish to avoid this genealogy of the term. Chandra Mohanty calls on a specific background for the term ‘Third world’ to justify and locate or position her use of it in her text. In her discussion of Ella Shohat and Robert Stam’s, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* Mohanty notes that “Shohat and Stam draw attention to the adoption of “third world” at the 1955 Bandung Conference of the ‘non-aligned’ African and Asian nations, an adoption which was premised on the solidarity of these nations around the anti-colonial struggles in Vietnam and Algeria. This is the genealogy of the term I choose to invoke here.” (Mohanty et al 1991:p. 357)

discourses. The term 'Least Developed Country' is a product of the same discourses, and is cut from the same cloth.

The definition of category LDC by the UN is located in the increasing role of development discourse within the United Nations. It is a product of a prolific discourse that produced also produced plans, agencies, programmes, resolutions and declarations and continually reviewed, revised and defined again anew. This productivity of definitions, plans and products is demonstrated with the proclamation of the 1960s as the 'Decade for Development' and the creation of the United Nations Development Program, which was followed by a second, third and fourth decades in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s<sup>27</sup>. Jones (1988) reflects:

The aim of the first development decade was to achieve a five percent per year economic growth amongst developing countries and to raise foreign assistance to a level of one percent of the annual gross national products of the industrialized states. During this period, however, unilateral nonmilitary aid did not increase substantially, and the UN's own programs were only a little more successful than they had been. The modest successes of the UNDP did, however, restore hope for collective advancement. (Jones 1988: 621)

The first United Nations Development Decade, 1961-1971, sought to implement *A Programme for International Economic Cooperation*. Halfway through this first decade, the UN Committee for Development Planning was formed, and towards the end of the first decade, the category LDC was created. Both the creation of the UNCDP and category LDC were initiatives in response to perceived gaps in effectively promoting and implementing a development agenda at that time. The perceived lack of progress for LDC's within these broader international efforts on development led to the commencement of specific international policy efforts for LDCs, with the UN developing three similar decade long plans to improve the status of LDCs from 1981<sup>28</sup>.

---

<sup>27</sup> The resolutions and programs of action associated with these Decades of Development would themselves make a fascinating study in the discourse of development from 1960s to today, however that is another and different project.

<sup>28</sup> From the creation of the LDC category in 1971, LDCs were specifically mentioned in these broader UN decades for development documents. The *International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade 1971-1981* included a specific section on Least Developed Countries, titled 'Special measures in favour of the least developed among the developing countries'. In 1975, halfway through the time period allocated for the implementation of this International Development Strategy for the Second UN Development Decade, a new strategy was formed, *The Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order*. This 1975 document sought to address the inequities and imbalances of the international economy, identifying these as a major impediment to development and obstacle to world peace and security. The *International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade 1981-1991* included a specific section titled 'Least developed countries, most seriously affected countries, developing island countries and land-locked developing countries'. The text on 'most seriously affected countries' referred to countries severely affected by sudden and steep changes in the prices of essential imports. The *International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade 1991-2001* also included a section on 'Special Situations, Including those of the Least Developed Countries'. The commencement of the LDC specific decade long plans by the

This productivity of UN development discourse is also seen in the emergence of a series of United Nations resolutions<sup>29</sup>, conferences, organisations and activities. This included the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which monitored the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade and had sought in the early 1970s to develop a clear mandate for international trade that provided structural preferences for developing countries<sup>30</sup>. The early years of the United Nations saw a strong technical assistance focus, with initiatives such as the ‘Expanded Program of Technical Assistance’<sup>31</sup> and later with

---

UN from 1981 is a clear indication that the inclusion of specific paragraphs for LDCs within this broader documents was not considered sufficient attention to promote improvement in LDC status.

<sup>29</sup> A series of significant resolutions were passed on international trade and development from 1957 onwards. These included 1957 General Assembly resolution 1027 (XI) Development of International Economic Cooperation and the Expansion of International Trade; 1958 General Assembly resolution 1318 (XIII) Promotion of the International Flow of Private Capital; 1959 General Assembly resolution 1421 (XIV) Strengthening and Development of the World Market and Improvement of the Trade Conditions of the Economically Less Developed Countries.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Agenda item 10 of the eleventh session of UNCTAD ‘Special measures in favour of the least developed among the developing countries’ incorporates an Annex ‘Agreed conclusions of the Special Committee on Preferences’ which puts forward a proposal for UNCTAD adoption to pressure the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade negotiations:

‘The Special Committee on Preferences:

1. Recalls that in its resolution 21 (II), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development recognised the unanimous agreement in favour of the early establishment of a mutually acceptable system of generalized, non-reciprocal, non-discriminatory preferences which would be beneficial to the developing countries.
2. Further recalls the agreement that the objectives of the generalized, non-reciprocal, non-discriminatory system of preferences in favour of the developing countries, including special measures in favour of the least developed among the developing countries, should be: (a) to increase their export earnings; (b) to promote their industrialization; and (c) to accelerate their rates of economic growth.”

(UNCTAD 1971)

<sup>31</sup> This scheme was established in the early 1950s. United Nations General Assembly resolution 519 A (VI) from its 360<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting on 12 January 1952 outlines that this scheme included the establishment of training and demonstration centers in specific countries on particular technical issues through the provision of pilot plants, research centers, financial and other support for the placement of technical experts requested, for the adoption and implementation of this technical expertise, and the placement of teams of foremen, workers and technicians from developing countries to business operations in industrialized countries. Its operations fit neatly with Rostow’s then influential modernisation theory on development, which listed technological skills and assets as one of the sharp stimuli, as he termed them, which could lead to the beginning of a take off into self-sustained growth (Rostow 1963). As a further aside, while on the whole international donor development activity now has a strong focus on capacity-building of indigenous institutions and assessment of appropriateness, the bald Rostow approach can still be seen, for example, in the contemporary Taiwanese aid agricultural projects, such as demonstration rice farms for Solomon Islands. The funds and operations allocated to the

a Technical Assistance Board, as well as through the activities of other UN agencies such as the Food and Agricultural Organisation, the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation.

Some shifts in the UN's development approach of the 1950s did occur over time within the UN and within its affiliated institutions. Martha Finnemore (1997) argues that the late 1960s and early 1970s was a time of significant change within UN development discourse that saw the institutionalization of poverty reduction as a critical focus for development efforts within the World Bank as opposed to increasing national Gross National Product (GNP). The emergence of category LDC in 1971 and calls for an increased focus on alleviating poverty in the countries identified as 'the poorest of the poor' aligns with this discursive shift in these UN and affiliated institutions<sup>32</sup>. Finnemore argues that this discursive emphasis saw a major shift in official rhetoric and operational practice, with increasing emphasis on World Bank projects in more social sectors of smallholder agriculture and education. This openness to the social sectors does not seem to have permeated the workings of the UNCDP in its administration of category LDC, which remains centrally focused on narrow economic definitions of poverty and development, where change is only measured in increased national GNP which is assumed to benefit the population as a whole.

The definition and creation of LDC as a category is a result of complex dynamics within the UN as an institution with the shifting power relationships between member states as more and more former colonial newly independent states joined the organisation and sought to ensure that their countries benefited from opportunities for assistance. The act of definition of category LDC is located as one of the many discursive products of the UN and its liberal humanism and approach to development. This origin of category LDC at a time when former colonized countries were seeking advantages has not challenged the term's discursive foundations in development policy and praxis. The LDC category is the creation of the UN's liberal humanism and development discourse, with all its Western post-enlightenment baggage attached.

### ***Committee for Development Planning***

The United Nations Committee for Development Planning (UNCDP) was established as a UN committee reporting and making recommendations to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which has representation from all UN member states. Given this timing and political dynamics within the United Nations General Assembly, the articulated purpose and need for this group provides important insights into how development discourse is operating in this institutional context. It is clear from the text of the resolution that formed the group that there was, at the time and within the membership of the United Nations General Assembly, an increasing interest in planning, notably the

---

Expanded Program of Technical Assistance program were combined into the United Nations Development Program in the 1960s to implement the first UN Development Decade (Jones 1988:621).

<sup>32</sup> Mawdsley and Rigg (2002) locate the production of the first World Development Report by the World Bank in 1978 with this shift.

use of economic projections in planning within the members of the ‘international community’ associated with the United Nations. The resolution to the ECOSOC itself is titled ‘Economic planning and projections’, and notes ‘with satisfaction’ the announced formation of a group of ‘highly qualified experts representing different planning systems’. The role of this group was outlined as follows:

The functions of this group should be, *inter alia*:

- (a) To consider and evaluate the programmes and activities of the organs of the United Nations and of the specialised agencies relating to economic planning and projections and to propose measures for their improvement for consideration by the Council;
  - (b) To consider and evaluate, *inter alia*, the progress made, within the framework of the activities of the United Nations and the specialised agencies, in the transfer of knowledge to developing countries and in the training of personnel of those countries in economic planning and projections;
  - (c) To analyse, with the help of the organs of the United Nations and of the specialised agencies, the major trends of planning and programming in the world, the principal problems and the solutions they are receiving, and in particular the progress made in that connexion relevant to the development of the less- developed regions;
  - (d) To study individual questions in the field of economic planning and programming referred to it by the Council, by the Secretary General or by the executive heads of the specialised agencies;
  - (e) To make any suggestion it may consider useful concerning the scope of its terms of reference;
  - (f) To make a provisional report to the forty-first session of the Council.
- (ECOSOC 1965)

While this Committee sought to promote development planning, it was not in a position to actually implement any of its suggestions in developing countries. This work of the UNCDP had little real world impact and effects, as it was not directly related to the implementation of development assistance in LDCs or any other developing country. Escobar’s analysis of development planning, as outlined in Chapter 1, is useful in locating the UNCDP’s work as a product of and reproducing the emphasis of a western notion of uniform progress within development discourse.

The UNCDP had its first meeting from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> May 1966. Over the years, the Committee has had its mandate shift and change through a series of General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions<sup>33</sup>. A significant addition to the Committee’s role was the responsibility for reviewing both the list of LDCs and the criteria for identifying them. This role was allocated to the Committee when the category LDC was created in 1971.

---

<sup>33</sup> For example, see United Nations Economic and Social Council Official Records 1995. Resolution 1995/215 ‘Committee for Development Planning’, 10 February 1995. This resolution called for nominations to the Committee membership, asked it to review working methods and sought the Chair of the Committee to provide annual presentations on the outcomes of the Committee’s discussions to the Economic and Social Council.



In 1999, forty-four years after the UNCDP was first established, it was reviewed as part of a wider review of committees and functions within ECOSOC. As a result it was re-named the Committee for Development Policy<sup>34</sup>. The membership requirements of the Committee for Development Planning and the Committee for Development Policy remained the same, a group of individual experts nominated in their personal capacity<sup>35</sup>. The role and functions of the Committee for Development Planning and the Committee for Development Policy remained similar<sup>36</sup>: a remit to assess world trends and emerging issues within and impacting upon international development prospects and assistance, and a continuing role in reviewing the list of least developed countries. It would continue to make recommendations and report to ECOSOC and ultimately through this body to the General Assembly. A key difference in the mandate of the Committee for Development Policy is that it now is formally required to review the list of LDCs in its entirety, and the criteria used for these assessments, each three years.

### ***Gender perspectives and policy shifts***

Gender analysis is a notable absence from operation of the category LDC through under the administration of the UNCDP. In applying a gender lens to the operation of category LDC, this thesis has identified limitations to the information used in the creation and administration of the category itself. In terms of the information used to form and inform the LDC category criteria and their administration, which is the core way in which the category operates as a technology of knowledge, gender sensitive information is excluded. This is an act that renders attempts by the UNCDP to include some aspects of gender sensitivity in its analysis marginal.

### **Gender-blind criteria, gender-blind reviews**

Gender analysis is not included in the criteria for determining category LDC. The criteria have been and remain gender blind. When the LDC category was first created by the United Nations in 1971, the initial criteria outlined for the definition of the category were as follows:

Countries having all three of the following characteristics should almost certainly be classified as least developed: per capita gross domestic product of \$100 or less, share of manufacturing in total gross domestic product of 10 percent or less, and literacy rate – proportion of literate persons in the

---

<sup>34</sup> Given the similarity of titles and function, I have used the abbreviation UNCDP to refer to both Committees throughout. For the text of the resolution on these changes see United Nations Economic and Social Council *Official Records* 1998. Resolution 1998/46 'Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields' 47<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, 31 July 1998.

<sup>35</sup> A breadth of geographic representation has always been a key feature of membership. In more recent times this has included experts of LDC nationalities. This has also been accompanied by an interest in the committee membership becoming varied, particularly in terms of the increasing the breadth and difference of skills, discipline knowledge and experience base brought to the Committee's work through its members.

<sup>36</sup> In the past, the Committee for Development Planning was able to set its own work agenda. The change to the Committee for Development Policy has seen the Economic and Social Council itself become much more engaged with the issues addressed by the Committee, tasking it on an annual basis with issues to examine, and approving the Committee's annual work plan.

age group of fifteen years and more – of 20 percent or less. In addition, certain borderline cases should also be considered eligible for inclusion in this classification. Countries with per capita gross product of \$100 or less, but with a manufacturing ratio or literacy rate somewhat exceeding the limits just suggested, should be included, especially if their average real rate of growth during recent years has been exceptionally low. Similarly, countries where per capita gross product is over \$100, but is no more than \$120, and which satisfy other criteria should also be included. In considering the borderline cases, however, judgement would have to be exercised to take account of the special circumstances that may have distorted the recent picture. (ECOSOC 1971)

All of these criteria are macro country level data, and none of these criteria include any reference to women or gender analysis. The information used for these criteria is always numeric, the consequences of which is explored in detail in Chapter 3, notably the way data functions as a technology of knowledge in LDC discourse. Here I want to focus on the fact that despite being quantitative, the criteria do focus on people and bodies, attested to by the inclusion of literacy, and later on health data have been identified as key issues for inclusion in the criteria. What is clear is that gender has and is consistently outside the scope of relevant information for consideration. The three reviews of the criteria that have occurred since the category LDC was created, in 1992, 1997 and 2002, have not included gender analysis in sphere of defined relevant information for consideration. Within this discursive terrain, gender is placed outside the specialized knowledge developed for administration of the LDC category.

The 1992 review of the criteria for determining category LDC was the first major review of the criteria since the category's creation. This comprehensive review focused on a broad range of issues, including the relevance of the criteria themselves within the broader development setting, and the composition of each of the criteria used to determine category LDC. This review saw fundamental changes to the composition of the criteria. An Economic Diversification Index (EDI) was developed to take into account a broader range of indicators considered important for assessing the strength of a national economy. Similarly, an Augmented Physical Quality of Life Index (APQLI) was developed to take into account a broader range of social indicators covering population health and education status. As an outcome of this review, a series of rolling reviews were scheduled. The UNCDP was required to review the entire list of countries within the category, and to review the criteria and their composition every three years. The 1997 review was the first of these now regular larger-scale reviews that included a review of the criteria as well as countries within the LDC category. This revised components of both the EDI and the APQLI. A 1999 review, the first meeting since the UNCDP was revamped as the Committee for Development Policy, had a similar broad scope. It revised the EDI to include issues of geographic vulnerability and was renamed the Economic Vulnerability Index, the EVI. The 2002 review also assessed various data sources used within the EVI and renamed the APQLI the Human Assets Index (HAI).

It is clear that in examining the criteria in each of these reviews, the gendered dimensions and nature of economic activity and poverty did not even make it to the table for consideration. Data sources are not disaggregated by sex, and indicators of

economic activity do not examine participation in the informal sector or unpaid labour. The pre-eminent development constraints are understood in two terms, macro-economic constraints and geographic constraints. For example, simple single indicator data of national literacy rates as an indicator of social conditions is changed in 1997 to a broader index of data covering a range of issues. The incorporation of health and education status issues in the criteria relates, in simplistic economic terms, to the 'supply' side of development, a need to have a healthy and educated workforce. The creation of the APQLI/HAI within category LDC criteria occurs without any reference to gender issues, and no data disaggregated by sex is sought for use in the assessment of country socio-economic context or surveys of the international development environment.

### **Gender and policy shifts**

There have been some efforts by the UNCDP to examine gender as an issue relevant to countries within category LDC. However, what emerges from reading the records of these meetings of the UNCDP is that the absence of gender as a relevant factor in the criteria for category LDC places gender as such a marginal issue it isn't even considered as an issue of significance. When gender is included in UNCDP analysis of LDCs it is clearly outside the main game, so to speak. In identifying this trend within UNCDP operations, it is clear that the discursive world of the UNCDP is isolated from broader gender policy debates within the United Nations. The United Nations 1975 International Women's Year and then Decade, the 1980 mid-term conference in Copenhagen, the 1985 Nairobi International Women's Conference and the resultant ten-year plan the Forward Looking Strategies, do not appear to have touched the workings of or been considered as remotely relevant to the UNCDP. It is only at the UNCDP's twenty-fourth session in 1988 that gender is mentioned for the first time as an issue relevant to development. This is after twelve years of significant international policy debates and three major UN conferences promoting policy to address gender inequality (Pietila and Vickers 1990). After all, it's not as if in 1988 women suddenly appeared in the LDC countries and hadn't been living and working and contributing to social and economic and cultural life in them previously. It is just in 1988 the UNCDP noticed women for the first time. This raises questions of why then? and why this session?, questions which I will explore in part in the discussion below. This gender-blind approach is a demonstration of the discursive boundaries operating within the technologies of knowledge, defining the (ir) relevance of information sources by the narrow, mechanistic gender-blind criteria that determine category LDC. What this thesis research demonstrates is that gender analysis (asking the question where are the women here when everyone else is talking about them?) provides an important tool to see that the technologies of knowledge operate within the development discourse of the category LDC by defining discursive limits of relevant information. Further, gender analysis is a key tool in opening these discursive boundaries for questioning.

Examination of UNCDP records reveals that when gender is included in analysis and discussion, it appears in three ways. The first is that gender always appears in the context of a broader issue or debate and is never mentioned as an issue that deserves the Committee's consideration on its own terms. Secondly, references to women are always essentialist, portraying third world women as victims. Thirdly, these references are fleeting. While gender may be included as an issue within a

broad policy recommendation made by the Committee, it disappears as an issue of concern when other issues are discussed or debated, and from one meeting to the next.

The first of the three ways that gender analysis appears within the UNCDP is in the context of a discussion of something else. In 1988, in advance of a broader review and preparations for the Third UN Strategy for Development, the UNCDP outlined a series of significant concerns about the current process and practice of international development:

In the 1980s debt-distressed countries have cut investment, reduced public expenditure and imposed deflationary contraction on their economies. In the low-income countries the share of public expenditure on education and health fell by 40 percent and 20 per cent, respectively; in contrast, expenditure on defence and general administration rose.

The pendulum has swung too far towards the neglect of human development. When Governments face the need of adjusting to short-term economic and fiscal constraints, there are policy choices to be made. For reasons of both efficiency and equity, the objectives of policy should be to safeguard human development programmes in order to reduce inefficiency and to improve delivery and targeting... (UNCDP 1988: para 8-9)

As a result of these concerns, the UNCDP proposes a shift in development policy approach, proposing a 'human capabilities approach to development'. This marks a shift away from a strict modernisation approach to development. This human capabilities approach to development is outlined in a session of the committee that maintains the emphasis in committee reports on stating a grave concern at the 'extensive and acute poverty in the world', and notably includes the first stated overt recognition of difference between country contexts in relation to development policy positions:

In formulating recommendations on a development strategy for the 1990s, Governments will have to take into account the diversity of country experience and the fact that policy options available to countries at a low level of development are severely limited. (UNCDP 1988: para 10)

Amartya Sen and John Rawls, both of whom are referred to explicitly in the report of this session of the UNCDP, heavily influence the introduction of the 'human capabilities approach to development' and are both cited in the report:

"The process of economic development", as Amartya Sen has said, "can be seen as a process of expanding the capabilities of people". That is, we are ultimately concerned with what people are capable or incapable of doing or being. Can they live long lives? Can they be well nourished? Can they escape avoidable illness? Can they obtain dignity and self-respect?...According to this view, development is concerned with much more than extending the supplies of commodities...Development planners have traditionally concentrated on the production of goods and services and on rates of growth. Increased physical output has been assumed to give rise to greater economic welfare. More recently, greater emphasis has been placed on the distribution of goods among people and to considerations of need and equity. The philosopher John Rawls defined deprivation in terms

of the availability of “primary goods” or “things it is supposed a rational man wants, whatever else he wants.” (UNCDP 1988: para 51-53)

The human capabilities approach, as articulated and proposed in this session of the UNCDP is understood as a process “which puts the wellbeing of people first, which regards human beings simultaneously as both the means and the ends of social economy policy” (UNCDP 1988: para 87). It has a focus on what is required by people and communities, rather than the macro economic environment, and incorporates equity of distribution as a central component of the approach. Accordingly, the focus of a human capabilities approach to development is on basic social goods and services: education, water and sanitation, food security and health services. This is aligned with the shift from the classic modernisation model of development outlined in Chapter 1.

So, it is in this context of the human capabilities approach to development that the first references are made to women. This occurs in relation to three issues: access to health services, the distribution of incomes, and access to education. The issue of access to health services is understood and described in the Committee’s report as related to the roles of women as primary caregivers, and the impact of women’s work in this context on the wellbeing of families, children, the elderly, and the sick. It makes specific reference to the impact of women’s nutrition during pregnancy on birth weight and consequent health status of babies and relationship to infant mortality. This discussion concludes with the following argument about the increased significance that women’s health and status assumes within a human capabilities approach to development:

In most developing countries, women have much less access to education, jobs, income and power than men. Women’s levels of health and nutrition are often inferior to men’s. Women generally account for the largest proportion of deprived people. The improvement of human capabilities requires, in particular, that the capabilities of women be improved. (UNCDP 1988: para 95)

It is clear in this text that women in LDCs are viewed and perceived as victims. The gender disparity and inequality between men and women is recorded. Women are mentioned in the context of their disadvantage, and as people whose capabilities require improvement. There is no recognition of the diverse complex social, economic and cultural roles women play in different communities in LDC countries. There is no recognition that women in LDC countries have strengths, existing capacities and make important contributions to social, cultural and economic life in their communities and countries. There is no recognition that women in LDCs may be different from each other, indeed that women within a given LDC may have different life experiences, opportunities and contributions. The representation is of women in LDCs as all the same, as victims with capabilities requiring improvement.

The second issue raised about gender in the UNCDP discussion of the human capabilities approach is about the issue of access to income. This is discussed in the context of distribution of incomes and benefits of social development programming. In the text of this discussion, the UNCDP notes that there is an assumption that all social development or ‘human development’ programmes disproportionately benefit the poor. The Committee argues that a human capabilities approach identifies beneficiaries differently, and that contemporary

human development programming disproportionately benefits male heads of households, based in urban areas with (relatively) middle or high incomes and that women living in rural areas and those with relatively low incomes benefit far less than is understood: a result of urban bias in program development and implementation. This representation of LDC women is as victims, excluded from the benefits of development. As with the previous example, this representation assumes all women in LDCs are the same.

The final issue raised as relating to women in the UNCDP report is the issue of access to education in the context of discrimination against women and girls' participation in education. The report cites:

...on average, the illiteracy rates among females in the developing countries are 75 per cent higher than among males – i.e. 49 percent among women as opposed to 28 per cent among men. In primary school women account for 44 per cent of the pupils in the developing countries; in secondary schools 39 per cent, in tertiary education 36 percent. In the least developed countries the situation is even worse: women account for only 20 percent of those studying tertiary education and 11 per cent of the teaching staff in tertiary education. (UNCDP 1988: para 114)

The representation of women in LDCs in this example in terms of aggregated quantitative data is reductionist. It represents all women in LDCs as the same, and as homogenous victims of the lack of development in their countries.

The treatment of these three issues – health services, access to incomes, and access to education – highlight that the explicit consideration of women's issues and concerns within the UNCDP is reliant on essentialist representations of women as victims, with narrowly defined needs and issues of concern. Further, there is no recognition at all that women in different LDC countries, or even women within any given LDC, may have different needs or issues of concern or relevance to their socio-economic status. All three issues and their examples, though particularly the first one, relate to meeting the basic needs of women to assist them to fulfil currently prescribed social and cultural roles. The second and third issues – access to incomes and access to education – are both discussed in the context of women's exclusion from benefit, either by poor planning and implementation in the case of the first one, or in terms of explicit discrimination in the second case. The human capabilities approach to development is outlined as one that can by its definition incorporate a focus on women's issues and needs. The critical issue revealed through the language adopted by the UNCDP is that women are viewed as 'passive', 'needy', 'requiring', 'without capabilities'. Women in LDC countries are not viewed, described or understood as agents in their own capability development with strengths, contributions, assets and resources that can be and are mobilised.

The Committee concludes this discussion of the human capabilities approach with an argument for development planning and assistance to incorporate a strong focus on human capabilities, basic goods and social services within the broader dominance of macro-economic considerations of promoting economic growth, and to avoid the tendency "to consider education, health and social services as consumer goods – luxuries to be afforded in good times but not in bad" (UNCDP 1988: para 132):

The Committee advocates that a broader view be taken of the development process- one that encompasses not only the growth of national per capita income and improvements in its distribution but also the enhancement of the capabilities of women and men to be and do more things and lead fuller lives. Education, health and nutrition have an important role to play in helping people develop their capabilities. The enhancement of capabilities is both an end in itself and a means to higher production and income. (UNCDP 1988: para 134)

Despite these strong words and argument, the Committee's own practice reveals that the relationship between the proposed human capabilities approach and the administration of the category LDC is very clear: nonexistent. This demonstrates the third way in which gender appears within UNCDP category LDC discourse; transitory and of limited relevance to other discussions.

Following the strong argument for the introduction of the human capabilities approach in the twenty-fourth session, in an ensuing discussion at the same meeting the Committee considered whether LDC status should be recommended for Mozambique and Zambia. In allocating Mozambique LDC status, the Committee noted that since independence in 1975, the economic status of Mozambique had declined. The two key sources of foreign exchange, remittances and earnings from transit services have both declined as the number of work permits granted to neighbouring countries decreased and alternate ports and routes were used. The Committee noted the negative impact of internal unrest, droughts, floods, cyclones on internal infrastructure and the economy, and the debt service ratio (in 1987) was estimated at 270% (UNCDP 1988: para 138). In this assessment, none of the issues highlighted in the human capabilities approach discussion were brought into consideration and discussion. This demonstrates how references to gender are fleeting and transitory, included one moment and excluded the next. In the very same session that the Committee proposed a new approach to development, and mentioned gender issues for the first time, when it came to conducting an assessment of LDC status it reverted to technocratic considerations within the limits and boundaries of the confirmed indicators. The Committee is unable to apply its recommendation about a changed approach to development to its own work.

These three characteristics of the way in which gender analysis appears within UNCDP are apparent in other sessions of the UNCDP. In the 1989 session of the Committee for Development Planning, the focus is on preparations for the negotiation of the Third International Development Strategy 1981-1991. The Committee for Development Planning identifies and recommends four key elements to be incorporated in this new strategy: "accelerated economic growth, greater concern for human development, an absolute reduction in the number of people suffering from severe poverty and deprivation and restraining the deterioration in the physical environment" (UNCDP 1989: para 7).

The explicit discussion of women arises in the context of a continued elaboration of the human capabilities approach to development, which was raised, but not applied, in the previous session of the Committee. The status of women is explicitly identified as an issue for development planning international policy:

Women represent more than half the world's population yet in many countries lag behind men in school enrolment, nutrition and health, and life expectancy in age groups below 50 years...Equality of opportunity for women is particularly necessary in all aspects of development (UNCDP 1989: para 11).

The essentialist representation of women in LDC countries as passive victims, recipients of development assistance with limited spheres of activity and interest continues. In this session, the UNCDP discusses women and children at the same time. The phrase 'Half our people, all our future: women and children' (UNCDP 1989: para 149) provides a good indication of this essentialist representation of women as passive victims waiting assistance. A discussion on human resources and development outlines the Committee's suggestion for the key element for the Third International Development Strategy:

The recommended approach during the next ten years is to emphasise those aspects of expenditure on human development which are akin to capital formation and to give lower priority to the purely social welfare aspects of expenditure programmes...there are important linkages between women's health, female life expectancy, the education of young women, the birth rate and population growth. (UNCDP 1989: para 147)

The UNCDP is focusing on essentialist characterisations of women with roles in society, culture and the economy limited to their roles in reproduction and as primary caregivers within family life.

This essentialist representation of the LDC woman in this UNCDP discussion is demonstrated during further deliberations in their report where the Committee outlines women's roles and status:

The crucial role of women in development has come to be acknowledged. Women in the third world perform the fundamental tasks of feeding and nurturing the population. They are responsible (particularly in Africa) for growing and marketing most of the food crops. They do most of the food preparation, obtain the water and fuel for the household, are responsible for health, nutrition and hygiene, and provide the early education of the young. Increasingly, too, women are engaged in wage employment or self-employment in the modern sector of the economy. It is not surprising that women are so important since they are, after all, half our people. (UNCDP 1989: para 149)

Women's roles in reproduction, as primary carers in family life, are clearly the focus. The acknowledgement that women are engaged in the 'modern' sector of the economy has an almost surprised quality to it. The issue of gender-based discrimination is raised later in the Committee's discussion:

Yet in many countries women have been neglected by development programmes and discriminated against by public policy. Female literacy rates are lower than men's. Female enrolment rates in all three levels of education are usually lower than men's. Females spend less time in education than males, probably because from the age of five upwards girls are expected to work in the home and in the fields. The nutrition and health of women are often neglected in favour of those of men. In India, Bangladesh and Pakistan there is evidence of discriminatory feeding and health practices favoring male children right from childhood. Despite the fact that women enjoy a biological advantage in longevity over men, life



expectancy for women in many developing countries is lower than for men in age groups below 50 years. This is largely due to two facts. First, there is generally a higher mortality rate for female than for male children above five years of age and secondly, there is higher mortality rate for women of child bearing age (15-44) than for men of corresponding years. In addition, in India and Pakistan, contrary to the usual pattern, the mortality rate among infant girls zero to five years old is higher than for boys in the same age group. These patterns of mortality rate are indicative of discrimination against girls from the time of birth onwards. (UNCDP 1989: para 150)

This discussion of gender-based discrimination occurs in terms of its negative impact on women's literacy rates, nutrition and health status, and is provided as evidence and rationale for the 'neglect' of women by development programmes and public policy. After the brief acknowledgement of agency and contribution to agriculture and the 'modern economy', LDC women are firmly repositioned back into their roles as silent suffering victims of their culture, their nation's lack of development and international development activities.

The Committee does identify gender as a key issue to be addressed in the UN's Third International Development Strategy. Drawing upon combined emphasis of both the critical contribution of women in social spheres in developing countries and women's negative experience of gender-based discrimination, the UNCDP argues these factors form the rationale for proposed altered policy priorities:

In the 1990s the task is to translate greater understanding of the problems of women into altered priorities. It is essential that women receive equal access to education and training programmes, to health and nutrition services and, in the sphere of production, to credit, extension services, technology and income-generating activities. Beyond this, sufficient investments favouring women are needed – e.g. in safe motherhood and in labour saving devices of particular relevance to women, such as more fuel-efficient methods of cooking, less labour intensive ways of preparing food and more accessible sources of water, field and fodder. Empowering women for development should have high returns in terms of increased output, greater equity and social progress. (UNCDP 1989: para 151)

While it is commendable that the Committee identifies gender as an issue to be addressed in the Third International Development Strategy, the representation of women's roles is very limited. This text clearly locates women in a passive role: no consultation required to work out what all women living in developing countries need, clearly all the same things. The emphasis is strongly on promoting 'altered priorities', to use the Committee's phrase, related to a gender role as primary carers in family life and social reproduction. The 'sphere of production' is included within the scope of the altered priorities, but is not the primary emphasis.

The inclusion of gender issues and references to women in the UNCDP's recommendations for the Third International Development Strategy could be seen as a key marker of change in the relevance and significance attached to these concerns by the Committee. However, within the very same meeting of the UNCDP, this recommendation is immediately followed by an example of how marginalised gender issues are within LDC development discourse. The Committee discusses the importance of incorporating a global strategy for water in development into the Third International Development Strategy. This proposed

global water strategy identifies issues, impacts, priorities and strategies for action. The Committee proposes this without any kind of gender analysis or sensitivity. Despite having articulated very clearly the importance of 'altering priorities' to take into account gender-based discrimination and include an explicit focus on women's roles in family and social care in development planning, the Committee's discussion on the global strategy for water only includes one explicit reference to women and gender issues and implications, which is to the role of women as gatherers of water, walking long distances, and the impact this has on the amount of water available for per person daily consumption. The point being made explicitly by the UNCDP is that where safe drinking water is available in villages and communities, consumption is considerably higher, and water-borne diseases are considerably less prevalent. The central point being made by the Committee with this point is not to raise issues of gender and water, and ensure that they are incorporated in their proposed global water and development strategy, but to demonstrate that there is considerable unsatisfied demand for water consumption to meet basic hygiene standards (UNCDP 1989: para 208). This example demonstrates again the transitory nature of the relevance of gender analysis within the discursive world of the UNCDP. If gender issues are raised, they are marginalised to discussions focused on women.

This characteristic of the way gender is treated within UNCDP discourse on LDCs is further shown in this 1989 session. The Committee also considered the criteria for the identification of the least developed among developing countries. In their deliberations issues of locational vulnerabilities were raised, "such as prevailing climatic and weather conditions, size, remoteness and being landlocked" (UNCDP 1989: para 320). The potential for including a quality of life index, and impacts of government policy on social and economic life were also raised. There was no mention of the use of gender-disaggregated data, or any form of gender analysis in the criteria or the recommended methodology for their use.

The UNCDP's 1988 and 1989 sessions are highly significant, being the first sessions where considerable discussion was devoted to issues of the status of women, and the engagement of women in development. This included a specific commitment in the 1989 session to recommend that priorities within international development planning and policy include a stronger focus on women, albeit in ways that focused on gender roles of women as primary caregivers in family life and that positioned women as passive actors in development. In this context, the discussion in the 1989 session is particularly significant, as in both the example of the proposed global water and development strategy and in the discussion on criteria for identification of the least developed among the developing countries, the Committee demonstrates a very limited capacity to integrate the gender analysis and 'altered priorities' it is proposing into its own work and discussions, despite having concluded earlier in the session's discussions how integral women are to development policy and planning.

In 1990 the UNCDP continues the focus on preparations and recommendations for international development strategy and policy. This session focused on poverty, producing analytical findings on the prevalence of poverty, assessing the definitions and locations of poverty and developing policy conclusions. This

session continues the argument for a stronger focus on the 'human capabilities approach' proposed in the 1988 session:

Persistent poverty is a product of inappropriate structures and poor policies. A major characteristic of the poor is their lack of productive physical assets and human capital...Poverty alleviation should not be viewed as a matter of charity.

During the 1980s, the numbers of the absolute poor increased in the developing countries as a whole. In Africa, the absolute poor have also increased as a proportion of the total population. In most countries implementing structural programmes, the incidence of poverty has risen. The poor should be seen as having the potential to become highly productive; investing in poverty alleviation should be seen as having a potentially high rate of return. (UNCDP 1990: para 18- 21)

This discussion about the definition and location of poverty is important. The UNCDP defines absolute poverty in terms of inadequate nutrition and severe deprivation of basic needs. A distinction is made between the geographic location of the largest populations with highest prevalence of absolute poverty, Asia, and the geographic location of countries with the highest percentage of population in absolute poverty, Africa. A distinction is also made between the regions where absolute poverty is more prevalent in rural and urban areas. The Committee continues this discussion by identifying major characteristics of the poor in rural and urban areas:

...In the rural areas they tend to be the landless or near-landless agricultural and non-farm workers, small landowning peasants, pastoralists, nomads and fishermen. In the urban areas, they are the unskilled, untrained and unschooled people; their productivity is low and they lack physical capital. A high proportion of the poor are women. In all countries households headed by women are the poorest in the community. The poor suffer from undernutrition even when they spend three quarters of their income on food. Their children are generally below average weight for age and suffer from impaired mental and physical development, which jeopardises their ability to become productively employed as adults. Ill health among the poor is widespread and saps their energy, reduces family incomes and prevents children from taking full advantage of such opportunities for education as exist. Illiteracy is high, life expectancy is relatively low and infant and child mortality rates are well above average. (UNCDP 1990: para 122)

This is important to highlight as it shows that the UNCDP has started to recognise the feminisation of poverty in LDCs. However, the way in which it is raised and treated is only as relevant information to be noted in observations about LDC development contexts. It is not given any priority by the UNCDP, and is definitely not treated as a core development issue for the UNCDP to engage with in its work promoting improvements in LDC social and economic status.

In this discussion about poverty, it is clear that while the UNCDP has attempted to discuss both the prevalence of absolute poverty and the characteristics of 'the poor' in terms that recognise difference, the language and expression reveals that the underlying understandings come from reliance on a uni-dimensional liberal economic perspective that treats populations with a conceptual homogeneity. This is demonstrated through the very limited set of characteristics available to 'the

poor' in rural areas and in urban areas in this text, all of which focus on a lack of agency, strength and capacity. The description of women is solely in the context of family responsibilities, and the discussion of children outlines an irreparable cycle of hopelessness, from poor mother to weak infant to ill, poor adult. Despite this, it is clear that the Committee had made a strong connection between gender inequality and poverty, made explicit in the following:

...what is needed is (not) more anti-poverty projects but a development strategy centred on the elimination of poverty, including a general improvement of women's social, economic, cultural, and legal status. A well-conceived development strategy should aim at accelerating growth and eliminating poverty simultaneously. (UNCDP 1990: para 24)

This position is reinforced by a recommendation that 'a well conceived strategy' would include reforms to enhance women's participation in public life and promote accessible family planning (UNCDP 1990: para 26)<sup>37</sup>. It is further reinforced by a recommendation that the impact of development strategies in their entirety, not just the development activities labelled "anti-poverty", should be assessed terms of their impact on "the poor", with a specific emphasis on gendered impacts (UNCDP 1990: para 25).

The next concrete mention of gender or women by the UNCDP is two years later in 1992. In this session, the Committee re-examines the international context for development cooperation efforts, with a significant focus on institutional reform of the United Nations and its agencies. It is in the course of a discussion on the linkages between environmental issues, development issues, poverty and economic reform processes in developing countries that a gender perspective is introduced and a specific discussion is noted on the impact of economic reform on women:

African women are a particularly vulnerable group in the face of declining real incomes and public sector supports, especially in low-income rural areas, because it is mainly up to them to find compensatory means to uphold family consumption and welfare. Normally, husbands and fathers transfer only part of their income to the family budget. When their income declines, they do not necessarily transfer higher budget proportions of it to the active household budget dispensed by women. This situation leads to a greater work burden and more severe time constraints imposed on women.

---

<sup>37</sup> The full proposition by the UNCDP is as follows:

A well conceived strategy should include a broad and consistent set of measures, including most of those indicated below in summary form and expanded upon in chapter IV:

- a) Redistribution of land;
  - b) Greater provision of agricultural services and rural infrastructure;
  - c) Greater investment in the development of human resources;
  - d) Removal of bias against the poor in expenditures on infrastructure;
  - e) Social and legal reforms to enhance the full participation of women in economic and social institutions;
  - f) Removal of unnecessary constraints on urban industry, especially small scale enterprises, ensuring that prices of credit and other inputs reflect real scarcities;
  - g) Family planning programmes and provision of birth control facilities;
  - h) Greater democracy and participation of the poor in local electoral politics and in the creation of organizations that support their cause.
- (UNCDP 1990: para 26)

The above situation, in turn, has an adverse effect on women's production incentives, and this is especially so in peasant agriculture, because simultaneous increases in both food and cash-crop production is likely to accrue to men. Women's rational reluctance to be redeployed to unremunerated work on export crops obviously weakens the efficacy of price incentives for export promotion. (UNCDP 1992: paras 159-160)

This emphasis on women is focused on the roles of women as primary caregivers in the family context, responsible for family social and economic welfare and nutrition. It contrasts gender differences in how income earned is allocated to family welfare. In the context of economic reform initiatives that are negatively impacting on the ability for both men and women to earn incomes and on the level of incomes earned, this text highlights a gender disparity in both the impact in terms of time required to work to earn cash income and in incentives to engage in the cash economy. In this discussion the UNCDP argues that there are gender differences in the perceived equation between work activities that seek to ensure family food security and work activities that promote national economic growth. What this example also does is represent all African women as the same, with the same experiences and roles in all countries and cultures. This example also represents all African women as victims – victims of both discrimination in the household, and as victims of poorly performing national economies.

The discussion in this meeting of the UNCDP includes a discussion critical of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), and notes the gendered dimensions of the negative impacts that were being identified. Explicit mention of the negative impact on women as a result of declining levels of health and education social service provision is made. The Committee also records the emergence of negative gendered impacts of SAP land reform, particularly on the ability of women to access land title. This recognition of the negative gendered impact of land reform initiatives indicates that the UNCDP has an appreciation of the intersection between women's human rights and development. This is the first time that women are represented as potential actors within and contributors to development. This recognition is reinforced with an explicit citation of a resolution by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) that acknowledges the importance of women's participation in decision-making, women's productive roles, and women's roles as providers of basic care (UNCDP 1992: para 222). Despite this shift in acknowledging the active roles and rights of women to land in LDC countries, UNCDP LDC development discourse is still representing LDC women as homogenous victims.

The characteristic of gender as of transitory or fleeting relevance to LDC discourse continues throughout subsequent sessions of the UNCDP. The Committee's twenty-ninth session in 1994 includes a strong outline of the overall objectives of development, arguing that the nexus between foreign aid as a modality of foreign policy and development assistance has been broken with the end of the cold war era, and that development assistance is now more closely focused on poverty reduction:

The ultimate objectives of development are easy to list. We are concerned to reduce global poverty and raise the standard of living of millions of people whose material wellbeing is extraordinarily low; we are interested in

expanding the range of choice open to people so that they may choose for themselves more satisfying lives; and we are concerned to enhance the capabilities of people everywhere so that women and men may come closer to fulfilling their potential. Development is thus about putting people first: the ultimate focus of policy and initiative must be on human development 'rethinking the framework for development cooperation'. (UNCDP 1994: para 1)

These ultimate objectives of development are articulated without a context/problem analysis- and the only indication that they include or are sensitive to gender analysis is that women are mentioned before men in the phrase about people's potential being filled. The only reference to gender analysis in the rest of the records of discussion from this meeting of UNCDP is in relation to maternal mortality as a critical indicator of women's status and the overall national health indicators<sup>38</sup>.

In 1999, at the first session of the Committee for Development Policy, the key topic for discussion is the role of employment and work in poverty eradication. The full and formal title includes an explicit reference to women, 'The role of employment and work, particularly of women, in poverty eradication in the context of globalisation'. For the first time in the Committee's deliberations, gender is an explicit focus of the discussion. The gender analysis, as outlined in the records of the meeting, is an improvement on that in previous years, beginning with the following acknowledgement:

Evidence suggests that poverty is especially prominent among women, thereby making it essential that policies to combat gender inequalities form an important component of all efforts to reduce poverty. (UNCDP 1999: para 4)

The deliberations focus on the benefits of globalisation more generally, and then outline the negative impacts of globalisation on LDC economies, identifying where the globalisation has increased LDC economic vulnerabilities. The Asian financial crises of 1997 and 1998 and the visible impacts on socio-economic status provide the general cautionary framework for the discussion, without dominating the content. The key gender specific benefit of globalisation listed in the discussion is the increased participation of women in the workforce, and the associated increased in household and broader social status, a benefit based on the feminisation of the export oriented labour force experienced in East Asia (UNCDP 1999: para 35). The discussion on negative impacts of globalisation on LDCs focused on the

---

<sup>38</sup> The UNCDP noted the inequity revealed by international comparisons of maternal mortality data:

Maternal mortality rates are a good indicator of the health situation and status of women. Maternal mortality is the largest cause of death among women of reproductive age in most developing countries. In less developed regions, there were on average 450 deaths for 100,000 live births between 1980 and 1985 against 30 in developed countries. Since those rates are higher in countries with crude mortality rates, they should follow the general trends of mortality and improve by the year 2000. But the wide disparities among countries are not likely to disappear, especially as the increase of life expectancy is expected to be slower in Africa, for example, which accounts for 30 per cent of maternal deaths as opposed to 18 per cent of births. (UNCDP 1994: para 93)

tendency for the economic benefits associated with globalisation to be distributed unevenly, increasing disparities of wealth between and within countries<sup>39</sup>. The negative impact of globalisation that received the most discussion was the increased vulnerability of LDCs. This was understood in several ways: as a result of increased exposure to international markets as a result of financial liberalisation; changes in the domestic labour market as a result of increased openness to trade competition; and the negative impacts associated with what the Committee described as the ‘forces behind globalisation – technological change, liberalisation and increased competition’ (UNCDP 1999: para 45). The other factors identified include increased environmental degradation as a result of increased primary commodity trade, notably the unsustainable rate of natural resource extraction. The Committee noted that the combined negative impact of all these factors could undermine LDC social cohesion, exacerbate social and economic inequalities, and increase social tension.

In tracing the gender specific impacts of globalisation the Committee’s focus on formal employment and the formal labour market led to the identification of issues associated with the ability of women to participate in the formal labour market, and associated with women’s participation in specific sectors. The Committee notes pro-growth development agenda requires understanding and attention to the poor:

Increasing gender equality is crucial to successful efforts to reduce poverty, because evidence suggests that poverty appears to be overwhelmingly female. Data based on a number of indicators of the gender gap for different regions show that, for developing countries as a whole, the adult literacy rate is 16 percentage points higher for men than for women; female school enrolment – even at the primary level – is 13 per cent lower than the level for males; and women’s share of earned income is a third of the total. (UNCDP 1999: para 59)

For example, the Committee outlined the gender disparity in accessing new technologies and the new social and economic opportunities available, a consequence of gender-based inequality of access to education and training. The formal employment opportunities most likely to be available to women are in labour-intensive industries where wages are low and jobs are unstable (Pearson [1991] 2001; Standing [1999] 2001). The vulnerability to trade downturns can result in rapid downsizing and high job loss (UNIFEM 2005). The other patterns of employment opportunities for women noted by the Committee are in the informal sector, in home-based work, temporary or casual employment- all unstable, with low wages and poor conditions.

In shifting to examining policy options available to address some of these issues, the Committee’s report outlines national and international policy recommendations

---

<sup>39</sup> The UNCDP discussion on globalisation included the following text:

The Committee noted that the overall net economic benefits of globalisation worldwide have been positive, but that the distribution of these gains have not been even, neither between nor within countries. For example, countries that account for 70 per cent of world population receive only 10 per cent of FDI flows. The least developed countries, with 10 per cent of the world’s people, have less than 2 per cent of world trade. While globalisation offers many opportunities, not all possess the full capability to take advantage of them. (UNCDP 1999: para 36)

on several issues: policies for growth and job creation, policies to improve capabilities, policies on income distribution and the alleviation of poverty, policies to correct for market failures and to smooth adjustment, policies to strengthen governance. The only ones to include both an international and national recommendation that included specific reference to women are in the policy recommendations on income distribution and the alleviation of poverty. These policy recommendations include ensuring national poverty alleviation strategies have a focus on women; addressing the gender disparity in access to education and skill development; addressing legislative discrimination against women; and increasing opportunities for women to participate in national decision making.

This analysis and set of policy options outlines a much stronger focus on gender analysis within UNCDP deliberations. The focus is on addressing women's poverty, as women are the majority of the poor; and on ensuring women are not discriminated against in access to education and workforce development opportunities. The focus is not on women as primary caregivers, nor is it on women as economic agents to improve national economic performance. The agenda is not far from a human rights framework, focused on rights to live free from all forms of social, economic and cultural discrimination.

Unfortunately, this was the Committee's last significant discussion on gender and development. The 2000 session of the Committee included major discussion on the role of information technology in development and on identifying recommendations for future international development strategies. The discussion on the latter was quite brief, and noted the importance of a full review of previous strategies identifying strengths and weaknesses. It made no reference to the need for an international development strategy to make reference to women and use gender analysis. The discussion on information technology explored a wide range of benefits and risks associated with information technology in developing countries, focusing on the economic benefits and new economic development opportunities, as well as the importance of ensuring that an international digital divide between LDCs and developed countries was not exacerbated. The sole and ineffectual token reference to gender analysis is in the list of policy recommendations for adoption by the United Nations and bilateral donors:

Building human and organisational capabilities for the productive use of IT, not only leading to the increased use of IT throughout the economy, but also taking into account gender equity and the need to help ensure the empowerment of women in cyberspace. (UNCDP 2000: para 50(f))

In a lengthy Committee report, this brief sentence is the sole reference to gender and women. This demonstrates the way in which gender issues continue to be marginal to LDC development discourse and are mentioned in passing.

The UNCDP explored this interest in information technology and development again in 2002. The focus of discussion this time was the social sectors – health and education and the widening disparity between least developed countries and others in health and literacy outcomes.

...At the basic level of education, the gender gap is persistent throughout, especially in the least developed countries, where only 62 per cent of girls are enrolled in primary schools and only 38 per cent of women are literate. (UNCDP 2002: para 62).



The Committee's discussion explored the disjunction between the opportunities available with the emergence of the international knowledge-based economies and associated aspirations, and the continuing challenges for least developed countries to meet basic health and education needs. The references to gender in this discussion are focused on the section that discusses policy recommendations.

Women's literacy is identified as critical in promoting improvements to population health and education outcomes in the discussion that outlines the importance of linkages between education and health services. This focuses on women's contribution to social and economic life as primary caregivers in households, and the role of women in contributing to formal and informal economic activity:

In this light, women's literacy is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate more in decision-making in society. Investing in formal and informal education and training for girls and women, with its high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable. Governments, the private sector and civil society should ensure that schools and informal systems of education play a stronger role in preventing infection from communicable diseases, especially HIV infection. Education should also play a role in eliminating discrimination against women through the inclusion of gender-sensitive education about safer sex and responsible behaviour. (UNCDP 2002: para 81)

The overarching policy recommendation is for comprehensive capacity building strategies to be developed that encompass both formal and informal education and health systems and workforces. The Committee recommends in particular that these strategies recognise the current levels of gender inequality in accessing formal education, and the pressure of social, cultural and household commitments on the ability of women and girls to access formal and informal education and training. In this light, the Committee highlights the need for both formal and informal education and training to be flexible, and focuses on functional skills development appropriate and relevant to the culture and community. This analysis highlights both women's productive and reproductive roles in society, and through its use of a framework that highlights gender inequalities, and supports a human rights based approach that addresses discrimination. However it is unclear whether in this case the Committee is arguing this from a human rights perspective or a more general and economic efficiency 'gender equality promotes economic development' perspective.

The UNCDP's 2003 session examined the issue of rural development, with the topic 'Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development'. This discussion focused on the importance of rural development as a major plank of development strategies in least developed countries. In outlining the causes and consequences of poverty in rural areas in LDCs, the Committee focus on health and education services and status, the degree of rural-urban migration, and environmental degradation. In discussing health and education services and outcomes, the Committee's sole reference to women is in a discussion about school dropouts:

This is particularly true for girls, as the education of girls and women has a wide impact, given their role as family and community caregivers. (UNCDP 2003: para 8)

The discussion on health focuses completely on communicable diseases. While HIV/AIDS is mentioned, the major focus is on insect-borne and water-borne diseases. There is no reference to maternal mortality and morbidity. In discussing rural-urban migration, two explicit references are made to women. The first is in relation to the impact on women in becoming heads of households as a result of male migration to urban centres for formal employment. The second is in relation to the vulnerability of women and girls to trafficking and slavery in unfamiliar urban environments if they move.

This gender analysis focuses on issues facing women in rural and urban areas, but is entirely based on a perspective of women as powerless victims, and does not outline the contributions and agency women bring to development efforts. This limited analysis comes through in the major findings and policy recommendations of the Committee. Four key priority areas are identified for action:

- (a) Expanding education and health services and providing incentives for rural people to take advantage of them;
- (b) Increasing agricultural productivity and non-farm activities through the use of technology, diversification and access to inputs and credit;
- (c) Improving access to local, national and global markets;
- (d) Examining all policies through “rural lenses” with a special focus on women. (UNCDP 2003: para 14)

There are references to women in (a) and (d). In the first priority area, the Committee argues that reducing gender discrimination would contribute to rural poverty reduction as part of a general argument that improved health and education status tends to be associated with improvements in other development objectives. The specific focus is on health care services and mother and child health programmes. It is of interest that despite it being widely acknowledged that the majority of rural farmers are women, there are no references to women in the second recommendation, nor any indication that gender analysis has been brought to these policy suggestions. The final recommendation is a broad strategic policy oriented catch-all. What is of interest here is that there is, finally, an acknowledgement about the diverse and complex roles of women in rural communities:

...In all cases, the gender dimension should be taken into special consideration, as women and girls often constitute a majority of the rural population and therefore stand to be the most important contributors to, as well as beneficiaries of, accelerated rural development; and in many of the poorest developing countries, women account for the largest share of agricultural output. Specific needs of women and the issue of the removal of constraints on their full participation in economic activity should be addressed as a matter of urgency. (UNCDP 2003: para 32)

Point (d) and the following text demonstrate an appreciation of what is required for gender mainstreaming. This is the first time that this has occurred in UNCDP discussions and is an important shift in the LDC development discourse. However this acknowledgement of the importance of a rural lens with a special focus on women is not applied across the board in UNCDP analyses of LDC development context.

The UNCDP's 2004 session is a further demonstration of the transitory way in which gender becomes relevant or disappears from view. The main focus of the session is on developing recommendations for a transition strategy for LDC countries to graduate from the category, and recommending the Maldives and Cape Verde for graduation from LDC status. In the papers prepared for the Committee's consideration, a report on mobilising resources to eradicate poverty in the LDCs was considered as a key document:

These countries are characterised primarily by very high levels of rural population who depend on agriculture for their livelihood, the majority of those living below the dollar-a-day poverty line are women and youths... Without significant increased access to financial resources, vulnerable groups such as small farmers, women and children, in the rural areas in particular, have little chance of producing their way out of poverty... Myriad benefits have been attributed to micro-finance programs. The Grameen Bank has been credited with addressing the structural determinants of poverty, economic and social status of women, and sources of vulnerability. (Binger 2004: pp 14, 17)

This 23-page report included these three specific references to women where it was clear that gender analysis was considered relevant. The remainder and substance of the report, on trading preferences, roles of bilateral donors and multilateral financial institutions, debt sustainability and development of the rural sector was gender blind. These three references to women were all asides, minor observations of the essentialist LDC woman's development context and experience.

This gender analysis of the UNCDP meetings over more than twenty years reveals that there are limits to the information and knowledge deemed relevant to category LDC. In highlighting the discursive boundaries of category LDC, gender analysis demonstrates that there is a narrow conceptual basis to the category itself; to the criteria, and to the analysis it produces. In undertaking gender analysis into the technology of knowledge classification into criteria, it is clear that gender is not a factor ever considered relevant to be included in the criteria for determining LDC status, and this means that efforts to include gender sensitivity into the work of the UNCDP struggle to have more than marginal relevance. This is demonstrated through the ways in which efforts to include gender sensitivity occurred. Gender analysis always appears in the context of another issue or debate, and is never considered significant enough an issue to be raised on its own terms. Gender references are always to homogenous third world woman as victim or passive recipient of assistance, never as an actor in development. Gender references are transitory within and between UNCDP sessions, mentioned in one part of a discussion but ignored in other aspects of the same discussion, or mentioned in one session and then essentially ignored in the next. The UNCDP's defined specialised nature of information relevant to category LDC is so limited that it took over a decade's worth of high profile and significant activism within the United Nations system on the status of women and the importance of gender sensitivity for the first references to women to appear in the official records of discussions. Gender analysis is a powerful tool for demonstrating the discursive limits of category LDC, and the technology of knowledge classification into criteria.

## ***Creating and administering category LDC***

The criteria used to define category LDC establish boundaries for LDC development discourse. The way in which the technology of knowledge classification into criteria operates is limited and constrained by these discursive limits. Gender analysis plays a critical role highlighting LDC discursive boundaries, and once these boundaries are visible, they can be explored further. What I have identified is that the main ways this technology of knowledge operates are firstly through the case- by-case determinations of country inclusion or exclusion from LDC category; secondly through the reviews of the list of LDC countries; and thirdly through the reviews of the criteria themselves. Through each of these operations two main dynamics can be identified. The first dynamic is the way the UNCDP develops and refines its own processes and procedures for analysis. The second dynamic is through the way the UNCDP focuses on increasingly specific information. These two dynamics in the LDC development discourse further limit and define the information used and analysis produced by the UNCDP about countries within the LDC grouping. They also influence UNCDP considerations about countries included in the grouping and the reviews of the LDC category itself. This section of the chapter will explore the productive nature of LDC development discourse through the operation of this technology of knowledge, identified through UNCDP meeting records and reports.

### **A productive category**

The category LDC itself is productive. In real terms, LDC status accords trading preferences and arguably preferential access to multilateral and bilateral development assistance. While being classified as being one of the poorest of the poor countries in the world may not immediately seem to be something a country would seek out, these benefits have created precisely this dynamic. From 1971 to the present day countries have sought inclusion in the LDC category (see Table 3 for details of countries included on the list). This dynamic underscores the operation of this technology of knowledge and LDC development discourse.

It is clear from debates within the UNCTAD at the time the criteria for determining category LDC were set in 1971 that the definition was a source of contention as countries sought to be included within the category. Records of the debates at the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD in 1972 include an intervention by Mr Olmedio Virreria from Bolivia on the matter of ‘Special Measures in favour of the least developed among the developing countries including land-locked countries’, seeking to include Bolivia in the category. He mounted a passionate argument for the inclusion of land-locked countries:

Because of its special situation, Bolivia regarded itself as one of the least developed among the developing countries. The criteria used to identify such countries should be reviewed; the Trade and Development Board and the Economic and Social Council had reaffirmed the need for continuing to work on their identification. Bolivia therefore requested the UNCTAD secretariat to pursue that task in co-operation with the Committee for Development Planning. (UNCTAD 3-25 October 1972 and 7-11 May 1973: para 116)

The substance of the Bolivian case rested on the observation that:

Non-access to the sea should be taken into consideration in the identification of the least developed among the developing countries; that was shown by the fact that of 18 land-locked countries 13 were to be found among the 25 on the provisional list...It was worth emphasising that the inclusion of non-access to the sea in the criteria would add only two Latin American and two African countries to the list already drawn up. (UNCTAD 3-25 October 1972 and 7-11 May 1973: para 118)

Bolivia's push for a review was bolstered, ironically enough, by support from small island states such as Madagascar. While not incorporating a specific call for the review of the criteria, the Economic Commission for Africa was concerned that the criteria for the category have a specific focus on African countries.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> The Official Records of the Economic Commission for Africa include a special resolution from the Conference of Ministers at their 163<sup>rd</sup> meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1971 on the special measures in favour of the least developed among the developing countries supporting this initiative, and requests that the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa "examine any concrete measures which may be decided in favour of the least developed countries and take account of their measures in order to ensure their appropriateness to the economic development of African countries" (ECOSOC 1970- 1971: paras 115-116). Resolution 232(X) from the same meeting called for the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa to develop a specific program for the African LDCs for the 1970s that could be taken to coming international meetings including the June 1971 Special International Conference of the UNIDO (ECOSOC 1970-1971: para 123).

**Table 3: List of the Least Developed Countries by date of inclusion in the list.**

Country	Date of inclusion on the list
1	Afghanistan
2	Benin
3	Bhutan
4	Botswana
5	Burkina Faso
6	Burundi
7	Chad
8	Ethiopia
9	Guinea
10	Haiti
11	Lao Peoples Democratic Republic
12	Lesotho
13	Malawi
14	Maldives
15	Mali
16	Nepal
17	Niger
18	Rwanda
19	Samoa
20	Somalia
21	Sudan
22	Uganda
23	United Republic of Tanzania
24	Yemen
25	Bangladesh
26	Central African Republic
27	Democratic Yemen
28	Gambia
29	Cape Verde
30	Comoros
31	Guinea Bissau
32	Djibouti
33	Equatorial Guinea
34	Sao Tome and Principe
35	Sierra Leone
36	Togo
37	Vanuatu
38	Tuvalu
39	Kiribati
40	Mauritania
41	Myanmar (Burma)
42	Mozambique
43	Liberia
44	Cambodia
45	Madagascar
46	Solomon Islands
47	Zaire
48	Zambia
49	Angola
50	Eritrea
51	Timor-Leste

Sources: UNCDP 1988, 1990, 1991, 1995 and 2003.

It is also clear from the records of debates at this time that the motive for seeking inclusion in the category was the perceived additional benefits that would accrue, both in terms of special trade-related measures and additional development financing from bilateral donors, international financial institutions and intergovernmental organisations. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) had both taken steps to place an additional priority on assistance to the LDC countries, and donor countries such as the US and Japan were both providing or indicating their interest in providing additional funds to support the agreed special measures for the least developed among developing countries<sup>41</sup>.

Despite consistent reiteration by the UNCDP and the UN more generally from the 1980s onwards that additional resources had failed to materialise, the perception of increased benefits to those countries within the LDC group continued<sup>42</sup>. It can be seen through these debates and discussions, that the LDC category itself is productive. The growth in numbers of countries in the category is not just a marker of deteriorating development contexts, but also a marker of the degree of interest amongst many countries in being included in the group to maximise development assistance. This dynamic underscores or provides the setting for the ways in which the technology of knowledge, classification into criteria, operates within LDC development discourse.

---

<sup>41</sup> During the debates on special measures to assist the least developed among developing countries at the 326<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Trade and Development Board on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1972 the US, for example, outlined that it had pledged to increase official development assistance to the 25 identified least developed countries in 1973 by \$US10 million from the previous year's commitment to those countries. Japan indicated that they would be contributing \$US15 million to UNDP for additional assistance to African LDCs (UNCTAD 1972 - 1973: paras 143-154).

<sup>42</sup> The 1982 session of the Committee outlines the Committee's concern at the status of the international economy. The Committee's report notes that 1981 saw a prolonged slow-down in economic growth; per capita output of developing countries fell, leading to major foreign-exchange shortages in some countries that affected basic service provision and production. The extent of the Committee's concern is highlighted when they noted that 'in such circumstances the objectives of the International Development Strategy for the present decade seem to be vitiated from the start.' (UNCDP 1982: para 13). These observations about the international economy and the significant difficulties being experienced by developing countries are accompanied by a concern about a 'rising tide of protectionist sentiment and the hardening attitude towards aid policies' (UNCDP 1982: para 16) and the fall in the proportion of development assistance through multilateral channels, both through the UNDP and the International Development Association (IDA). These sentiments continue in future years. In the UNCDP's 1986 session it is of interest to note that in the first chapter of the Committee's report of this session the Committee observed the following:

Until the flow of development finance is restored, prospects for adequate growth and social progress in many of the world's poorest nations will remain negligible, whatever efforts their Governments make to put their own house in order. (UNCDP 1986: para 4)

### **The criteria create the context**

The fact that the criteria themselves become the focus of the UNCDP demonstrates the productivity of LDC development discourse. Records of the UNCDP meetings reveal that the UNCDP expressed concern about the restrictive nature of LDC category criteria in the Committee's considerations of LDC country status over many years. In examining the UNCDP reports of their reviews of the LDC criteria, it is clear that this the boundaries of the LDC development discourse produce both a specific approach and results from the process of conducting general reviews of the criteria. In examining the records of these reviews, it is apparent that the review process is always one where regardless of any identified challenge to the relevance and utility of the LDC category, the Committee works to refine the criteria by establishing a set of specialised processes and protocols for what the review should consider and how. These processes and procedures, and the identification of the specific information required, mark the LDC criteria themselves becoming an increasing focus of the UNCDP's work.

This highlights a key way in which this technology of knowledge operates through the processes and procedures and information privileged in the conduct of these reviews of the LDC criteria. Two key characteristics of the operation of the technology of knowledge classification into criteria are identifiable from UNCDP reports. Firstly, that the LDC criteria themselves have become a major focus of the work of the UNCDP with ever more elaborate and specialized processes for criteria use, assessment and review. Secondly, that despite the Committee expressing frequent concerns about the content and limitations of the LDC criteria, when given the opportunity to review their composition and structure, the narrow limits of the criteria themselves appear to limit the scope of the issues considered relevant by the UNCDP to the category. As a result the range of issues included within the review and the category remains limited. The initial criteria for determining LDC status set the discursive terrain, and while it appears that there is some change over time to the criteria and the function of the category, the LDC category's core narrow mechanistic limits remain.

The first UNCDP review of the criteria for assessing and determining LDC status occurred in 1992 during the Committee's Twenty Seventh Session. This review also included an assessment of the benefit in maintaining the category at all. However, far from this assessment incorporating analysis of the benefits to those countries classified as LDCs over the past twenty years, it focused on the utility of the category to the supply side of 'international development' – usage by donors. This is highly pertinent in terms of context of LDC development discourse within a broader context of productive development discourse in general and the power/knowledge dynamics between the 'West and the Rest' (Hall 1992). In terms of these donor perspectives, the Committee for Development Planning identified that donors used a range of criteria in allocating development assistance, and the role of the LDC criteria in decision-making about levels and types of assistance was marginal. This very recognition shows that the initially envisaged power, in fact the original major purpose, of establishing the category and its criteria, in terms of becoming an internationally agreed arbiter of country economic status and need for increased assistance, had not been adopted by the donor community (UNCDP 1991: para 215- 217). This is clearly a demonstration of power sitting



where the purse strings are, i.e. with bilateral donors, whose motivations include their national interest (for example the objective of the Australian aid program begins with the phrase “to advance Australia’s national interest” (AusAID 2006)). In this review the Committee determined that the overall objective of the category itself is to “identify countries afflicted by poverty combined with severe structural weaknesses which impede the achievement of sustained development” (UNCDP 1992: para 42). Despite documenting misgivings about the utility of the category for and by donor organisations, the UNCDP determines that the LDC category list, and the administration of the criteria are, in essence, their own reward. The discursive boundaries are circular. The existence of the category LDC creates criteria and a need to administer the list of countries within the grouping, which justifies the utility of the category.

The key components of this first review were as follows: the determination of overall objectives for the category as a whole, an examination of the specific criteria, and a consideration of rules for country inclusion or graduation from the category. The review then applied the new criteria to the list of LDCs and made determinations for inclusion and graduation. The original criteria used when the category was first developed were “a blend of structural features that could result in slow growth and the indefinite perpetuation of poverty (geographical location, climate, small size, undeveloped human resources and inadequate economic infrastructure) and low average income itself” (UNCDP 1992: para 215). Population size was set at 75 million or less, which was retained as a factor in determination of least developed country status. A key issue within this set of criteria was the emphasis on population size, which meant that the countries with large populations, who would have a larger population of poor people, were excluded from the category. In assessing the criteria, the UNCDP was concerned about the availability of and variation in quality of data for various countries.

The UNCDP had noted concerns about the availability and quality of data in the assessment of criteria for the determination of LDC status since the category was first created in 1971. Therefore, in reviewing the criteria the Committee was concerned that data used in application of criteria be robust and sound, whether used as a single data source indicator or as part of an index, in a way that is clear, readily understood and not so volatile as to be subject to frequent or dramatic change. This is a decision that reveals the way in which the data, the information source, is determining the type of information considered within scope for the criteria. It reveals that the technology of knowledge classification into criteria operates by requiring certain types of information, in certain forms, which dictates or pre-determines the information that will be used and considered as relevant.

In the 1991 assessment of the criteria, the UNCDP agreed to stay with the overall structure of the previous criteria used to determine LDC status, and no subsequent review has sought to expand the number of criteria used to determine LDC status. The 1991 review of the LDC criteria was the most comprehensive undertaken to date, and featured significant change to two of the criteria, those used to assess national economic strength and population social welfare. For both these criteria, the use of a single indicator was discontinued in favour of an index that included several indicators. The indicator of population poverty level was not altered, despite recognition of a variety of other ways to assess population poverty levels.

The UNCDP based this decision on practical considerations, as this data was presumed broadly available in most countries seeking assessment for inclusion in the list. The availability of data is determining the criteria, which is determining the LDC grouping. This privileging of specific data sources is a characteristic of the operation of the technology of knowledge classification into criteria, and is apparent in all the UNCDP reviews of the LDC criteria.

The two key criteria that were altered as a result of the 1991 review had been applied – share of manufacturing in gross domestic product and adult literacy rates. The former indicator of the relative weakness/strength of the structure of the economy was altered to ensure that the availability of natural resources was considered, as was the share of employment in industry, per capita electricity consumption and export concentration ratio (UNCDP 1992: para 235). This was termed the Economic Diversification Index (EDI), based on identified available data. The second criteria had used the adult literacy rate as a single indicator of the strength/weakness of human resource capital in LDCs. Adult literacy rates were used as a single indicator of population human resources. The UNCDP identified this as limited as it did not reflect any aspects of population health status at all, nor did it reflect population levels of education achievement. Accordingly, a composite indicator was proposed, termed the Augmented Physical Quality of Life Index (APQLI). This was based on four indicators covering both health and education status. The two health-related indicators within the index were average life expectancy at birth, and per capita calorie supply. The two education-related indicators within the index were combined ratio of primary and secondary school enrolments, and the adult literacy rate (UNCDP 1991: para 234).

The conduct of the first review of the LDC criteria created a demand for regular triennial reviews of the criteria.<sup>43</sup> Later reviews in 1994, 1997, 2000 and 2003 altered the data sources used within these indices to include other issues and changed their names<sup>44</sup>. In 2000 the EDI became the Economic Vulnerability

---

<sup>43</sup> The report back from the presentation of the outcomes of this review is recorded in the UNCDP's Twenty-eighth session. This notes that the results of the review were endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, on the proviso that the Committee continued to identify improvements to the criteria themselves, and the interpretations associated with their use in determinations of countries being included or excluded from the LDC category (UNCDP 1992: para 237). See resolution 46/206 from the second committee of the forty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly "Report of the Committee for Development Planning: criteria for identifying Least Developed Countries".

<sup>44</sup> For example in the 1997 review the composition of the EDI was assessed and the Committee recommended that this indicator be revised, and per capita energy consumption be used in its place. The rationale for this was that energy consumption per capita was a broader indicator of the availability and level of access to energy for development than electricity usage, clearly dependent on access to electricity within a formal grid network. In the 1999 review the UNCDP recommended that the APQLI use under-five child mortality data in place of life expectancy at birth data, based on the quality of data available. A further recommendation was made to change the source of data on nutrition, also based on the quality of data available. In the 1997 review the Committee also recommended a change to the measure of GDP used in order to better take into account inflation rates. This change was to replace the current measure, of 'a three year average of per capita GDP, expressed in United States dollars at current official exchange rate by per capita GDP for a

Index, including data on incidence of natural disasters<sup>45</sup>. The APQLI became known as the Human Assets Index (HAI) in 2003. What is clear in examining the records of the UNCDP discussions is that in each of these changes a paramount consideration has been the widespread availability of quantitative data that can be used in country assessments:

The Committee stresses that the credibility of its triennial review of the list is partly dependent on the fact that it uses data collected on an internationally comparable basis by specialised agencies of the United Nations system, such as [the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations] FAO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Health Organisation. (UNCDP 2003: para 18)

This demonstrates that the scope of issues that can be included in the assessment of LDC status is limited to the issues where there is widespread data availability. The data determines the criteria, which determine whether a country is assessed as eligible for LDC status. In the 1998 review focused on the merit of two specific indicators. The first was the use of average Gross National Product (GNP) per capita in place of the current indicator, average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. The recommendation of the Committee was that the use of GNP per capita did provide significantly different data for some countries than that provided by GDP data; however it did not lead to overall different outcomes or conclusions when applied in specific country situations. The Committee “felt it was unclear as to which might be a better indicator of the development capabilities of countries” (UNCDP 1998: para 233). Further, while the UNCDP recognised in 1994 that a natural disasters have major social and economic impacts on developing countries, particularly for small island states, it was not included within the criteria until 2003 when the EDI was replaced by the Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI) and ‘the Committee was informed that the quality of internationally comparable data on the number of people displaced by natural disasters had improved significantly’ (UNCDP 2003: para 11).

With the technology of knowledge classification into criteria operating by making the criteria themselves the focus of LDC discourse, the discursive boundaries are reinforced with each review. In this review the UNCDP also considered both national governance methods and human rights issues in reviewing the indicators for determination of LDC status. In this consideration the Committee noted that both issues have important relationships to development outcomes, but were of the view that it would be inappropriate to use them in ‘decisions relating to the

---

benchmark year (in order words, the same year for all countries) converted to United States Dollars at the country’s average exchange rates over three years’ (UNCDP 1999: para 126).

<sup>45</sup> The Committee commenced working on the development of an EVI in 2000. The composition of the EVI was recommended as an index based on five indicators: the degree of concentration of exports; the extent of the instability of goods and services exports; the degree of the instability of agricultural production; the share of manufacturing and services, including transport and communications, in national Gross Domestic Product; and population size (UNCDP 2000: para 68). This issue had been discussed in detail in the UNCDP’s 1998 session, however the Committee’s final recommendation at that time was not to proceed with the inclusion of a new indicator that addressed these development constraints or issues because it did not sit within the current composition of the EDI.

inclusion in, or exclusion from, the list of least developed countries' (UNCDP 1991: para 231). These issues were outside the discursive boundaries, and not able to be included in quantitative assessments, and so remained outside the scope of relevant information for analysis.

The reviews also focused on the processes used in undertaking country assessments and general reviews of the list of countries within the LDC group<sup>46</sup>. For example, in the 1991 review the Committee determined that while the criteria themselves may be focused on a prescribed set of data, when assessing whether a country should be classified or unclassified as a LDC, a series of other data should be considered. It recommended that in deliberations about whether a country should be included in the LDC category an additional four indicators were to be examined. The first was a natural endowment index based on agricultural land per capita, exports of minerals as a percentage of total exports, average rainfall and rainfall variability. The second was an assessment of the climate, and its impact on the stability of agricultural production. The third was a measure of the exports of petroleum as a percentage of total exports, and the fourth was the percentage of GDP that is official development assistance (UNCDP 1991: para 240). In the 1998 review the UNCDP recommended that methodology of application of these criteria during country assessments and general reviews be changed so the data within composite indices was scaled, with maximum and minimum values, rather than presented as a single figure. These changes indicate how in undertaking regular reviews the processes and procedures for the application of the criteria become increasingly complex, refined and specialised.

The 2003 general review further demonstrates how these discursive limitations operate through the technology of knowledge, classification into criteria. The UNCDP's preparatory discussions in 2002 acknowledged that there were particular development challenges faced by countries with economies in transition that had

---

<sup>46</sup> For example in the 1991 review the process for identifying which countries fell within the LDC grouping was outlined:

For those developing countries that meet the per capita GDP criterion and whose population size does not exceed 75 million, eligibility for least developed status will be determined in three stages. First, a core list of least developed countries will be identified among those that fall below the cut-off point on both indexes. Next, the remaining countries will be assessed on the basis of a set of more qualitative indicators – namely, being landlocked, having a small population (1 million or less), being an island (or islands), and having climatic disadvantages – such as proneness to drought, floods and cyclones – on a case by case basis. If any of these countries falls below the cut-off point on either index and is landlocked, or is an island, or has a population of 1 million or less or suffers from frequent cyclones, droughts and floods, it may be included on the list. At each stage of assessment, the Committee will consider the APQLI or the EDI or both as well as the component indicators of the indexes. Moreover, in borderline cases, consideration of the additional structural characteristics mentioned above will be considered.

If the assessment of eligibility on the basis of the above criteria and procedures turns out to be inconclusive with regard to one or more countries, the Committee might commission in depth studies before reaching a definitive conclusion. (UNCDP 1991: para 242- 243)

been members of the former Soviet Union, and decided to include them in the broad list of countries assessed against the LDC criteria. (UNCDP 2002: para 151-152). In advance of this general review of the LDC list, a separate meeting on the LDC criteria reporting to the Committee for Development Policy considered the merit of this proposal and recommended against it. This reveals again how the discursive boundaries of this technology of knowledge operate, privileging the established and refined processes and procedures above all other considerations. This meeting noted that several countries with former socialist economies<sup>47</sup> now had a low average gross national income per capita, some lower than countries within the LDC category. However, they had strong human capital as a result of the emphasis on public education and health care in the socialist economy. For countries to be included on the list of LDCs they needed to meet the thresholds for inclusion against all three LDC criteria. The concern was that the thresholds for one of the LDC criteria, the Human Assets Index (HAI), are set at the points along the range of all scores for all countries included in the assessment, and the current high levels of human capital in these countries would distort the overall index. As a result of this concern, this meeting of experts recommended that these countries not be included in the formal assessments as part of the 2003 review. The desire not to distort the index is considered of greater importance than the development challenges and context facing these former socialist countries.

Within each of these changes identified in the reviews of the LDC criteria it is clear that none of these changes made any reference to gender issues, or sought disaggregation of data by sex for use in assessment of country socio-economic context. It is clear that in examining these criteria, the gendered dimensions and nature of economic activity and poverty did not even make it to the table for consideration. Data sources are not disaggregated by sex, and indicators of economic activity don't examine participation in the informal sector, or unpaid labour. The pre-eminent development constraints are understood in two terms – macro-economic constraints and geographic constraints. The incorporation of health and education status issues in the criteria relates, in simplistic economic terms, to the 'supply' side of development, a need to have a healthy and educated workforce. In neither case was there a recommendation on introducing data disaggregated by sex as part of the analysis.

What this examination of the UNCDP records of the reviews of the LDC criteria highlights is that the technology of knowledge classification into criteria operates by making the criteria themselves, their composition and the ways they are applied, a major focus of LDC discourse. Issues impacting on development contexts are not included in the LDC criteria as data is not available. Countries are not included in the LDC grouping so they do not distort the index. While utility of the category itself was questioned in the first review, the existence of the category and the criteria themselves is justification enough to continue to administer them and refine the processes by which they are applied. Further, while the largest number of changes occurred in 1991, it is clear that in this review, as in all future reviews, the discursive boundaries set by the first established LDC criteria continue to frame

---

<sup>47</sup> These countries were identified as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The World Bank classifies all nine countries as low-income countries.

and limit the scope of all reviews. Gender analysis, for example, is never even identified as an issue of relevance.

### **Assessing inclusion in the LDC list**

The perception of the category as a source of benefits for developing countries has continued to see countries applying for membership. The discursive limits of the category, and its productivity, are revealed through the following close examination of some cases of where the UNCDP has assessed countries for inclusion and graduation. These cases demonstrate the narrowness of the criteria being used to assess a country's development status for the LDC category. In particular it reveals not only that gender is ignored but that even factors such as civil unrest and conflict are also left out of consideration. By considering cases from the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, a sense of the ways in which the process has been refined over time can also be ascertained. The following discussion will examine the experiences of a number of countries who have requested inclusion in the category and been assessed by the UNCDP. What becomes clear is how often the limits of the LDC development discourse lead to situations where critical information about a country's context, such as significant internal conflict, is excluded from consideration.

This process of assessing countries for inclusion in the LDC list is a key way that the technology of knowledge classification into criteria operates. This assessment is prompted by two events: the request of a specific country to be included in the LDC category, or a general review of the list identifying countries that can be included. The latter is the key event that triggers an assessment and recommendation for a specific country to 'graduate' from the list of countries within the LDC grouping. Through examination of the UNCDP records it is clear that these assessments have become increasingly specialised with carefully documented explanations for each decision, no doubt a result of the interest and benefits that are seen to accrue to countries within the category. Each time a country is assessed; specific data about that country is sought and benchmarked against specific aggregates that are updated each time an assessment is undertaken.

The report from the Committee's session in 1981 outlines the committee's discussions of requests, supported by the United Nations General Assembly, for the consideration of several countries to join the LDC category: Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles and Tonga. The Committee determined the status of these countries in relation to the LDC criteria on the basis of contemporary data, notably per capita GDP, share of manufacturing output in total gross national product and the rate of adult literacy. On the basis of this data alone, the Committee determined that only Guinea-Bissau was eligible for LDC status. It is of interest to note that the report of the Committee's deliberations also includes the following statements:

The Committee wants to underline, as it has done in earlier reviews, the need for using the category of the least developed countries in an appropriate and flexible manner in matters relating to the terms and allocation of international assistance in different fields.

In the present exercise, the Committee applied the existing criteria, updated for change in prices and real growth of per capita GDP of the world market economies, as it was asked to do. The experience obtained on this occasion

and in past years in reviewing the list of the least developed countries has led the Committee to the view that fresh appraisal of the criteria used for the identification of the least developed countries has become highly desirable and that the possibility of revising the present criteria deserves to be explored at an appropriate time.

The broader question of the usefulness of the various country groupings deserves more attention. The United Nations system has recognised different groupings of disadvantaged developing countries, but several of them overlap – least developed countries, developing island economies, land-locked, most seriously affected countries. The possibility of rethinking and tidying up the various groupings should therefore be explored. (UNCDP 1981: para 105-107)

This example outlines the uncertainty that the Committee experienced in making determinations on the basis of limited criteria that were not able to reflect the complexity of a country's development context. It clearly indicates that the Committee is of the view that a review is required, not just of the criteria related to the LDC category, but of the other categories that had emerged, notably land-locked countries, island countries and most seriously affected countries. This uncertainty may reflect the Committee's sense that the potential for additional resources and trade concessions, combined with the difficult international development context, and the act of definition which had led to exclusions such as Bolivia as cited previously, had seen countries form multiple new coalitions and create new categories in order to access additional assistance, i.e. specific UNDP programmes, or other development initiatives associated with multilateral development assistance. It is at least arguable that the Committee felt that the emergence of new and different categories arose from a view that this was splitting the development assistance kitty too many ways. This example is a demonstration of the discursive boundaries at play within the technology of knowledge classification into criteria. Specific data is identified for benchmarking a particular country against international aggregates. It also demonstrates the way that only 10 years into the operation of the category; the criteria themselves are becoming a major focus of the Committee's work.

During the 1982 session, the Committee was requested by the Economic and Social Council to consider Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone and Togo for inclusion into the LDC category. It is worth noting that three of these countries were considered and rejected in the previous session of the Committee for Development Planning. As cited previously, the Committee assessed data relating to the criteria for each of the countries listed above, and determined on this occasion that Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone and Togo should be added to the list<sup>48</sup>. During these deliberations, the UNCDP expressed concern about the criteria for determination of LDC status:

The Committee wishes to underline what it has already stated in earlier reviews of this kind – that in its opinion the criteria used for the identification

---

<sup>48</sup> See United Nations Economic and Social Council *Official Records* 1982. Resolution 1982/41 'Identification of the least developed among the developing countries', 48<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting from 27<sup>th</sup> July 1982.

of the least developed countries deserve to be reappraised, only so as to allow for a meaningful consideration of cases on the margin, where the weakness of the statistical information could have a bearing on the decisions of the Committee on these matters. (UNCDP 1982: para 104)

This interest in the review of the criteria, and careful consideration of the purposes and roles of the use of the category in the allocation of bilateral and multilateral development assistance, and in special trade concessions, was clearly an important issue for the Committee. The perceived or actual benefits that were seen as accruing to countries saw repeated efforts by some countries to have their position and status assessed. After the determination of the Committee in 1982, Liberia provided data for reconsideration of its status in both 1983 and 1984<sup>49</sup>. Each time it was met with repeated determinations by the Committee that its development context was not so dire to be included in the list of the least developed among the developing countries. In each case, the Committee repeated its concern about the need for a review of the criteria. In 1983 reaching the conclusion that ‘no useful purposes would be served by reference to the Committee of further cases of countries to be considered for identification as least developed countries under the existing criteria’ (UNCDP 1984: para 129).

The case of Liberia seems to have triggered the Committee’s unease particularly sharply because of the Liberian government’s repeated applications for its case to be reconsidered. After its rejection in 1982, Liberia petitioned again in 1983 and 1984. Each time it met with repeated determinations against inclusion as a LDC. It was, however, not until 1990 that Liberia was accorded inclusion in the LDC category and then only with the intervention of the Economic and Social Council who requested a reconsideration<sup>50</sup>. As with previous assessments, the Committee examined information provided by the Government of Liberia, and a report prepared by the Secretariat of the Committee on Liberian data benchmarked against aggregates determined for use in assessments of the LDC criterion that year. By this time in 1990, Liberia had been in a state of civil unrest and disturbances deteriorating to a coup d’etat that ultimately led to horrific internal conflict and lawlessness so complex that still to this day it has not been resolved into a full lasting lawful peace, and the country is referred to as a ‘failed state’ (Pham 2004)<sup>51</sup>. The eventual success of Liberia was based on the assessment of the Committee that while Liberia had a strong natural resource base of both forest resources and minerals, and good conditions for agricultural activity, GDP per capita was not only low, it had declined consistently over the previous two decades. Accordingly, Liberia was recommended for inclusion in the LDC list (UNCDP 1990: paras 159-162). This deterioration in the legitimacy of the state

---

<sup>49</sup> See UNCDP 1983 and UNCDP 1984 for details.

<sup>50</sup> See Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/206 of 9 February 1990.

<sup>51</sup> Pham documents that “...by August 1, 1990, over 5000 Liberians had died in the conflict and some 345,000 had fled their country for shelter in neighbouring states: 225,000 in Guinea, 150,000 in Cote d’Ivoire, and 70,000 in Sierra Leone...In the first year of the civil war alone, a full third of Liberia’s estimated pre-war population of 2.64 million had fled the country...As late as the end of 2002, despite the relative peace established in the immediate aftermath of the 1997 elections and extensive efforts at repatriation or third country asylum, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees still counted 274,516 Liberian refugees...” (Pham 2004: 102, 144).



and complex and costly conflict is not even mentioned in any of the UNCDP assessments of Liberia as a LDC<sup>52</sup>. This information and country context is entirely outside the discursive boundaries of the information considered relevant in the operation of the technology of knowledge classification into criteria.

The difficulties faced by Liberia in seeking inclusion in the LDC list did not deter other countries for seeking LDC category status. The longstanding concerns expressed by the Committee about the effectiveness of the criteria in assessing countries for inclusion in the LDC list have not been a deterrent either. What is interesting, in comparison to the Liberian example, is that these factors and ‘development challenges’ facing the tiny coral atoll nation of Kiribati do sit within the domain of legitimate and relevant information to be considered by the UNCDP. They are within the discursive boundaries of the LDC technology of knowledge classification into criteria and accordingly are included in consideration.

In 1984-5 Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tuvalu, who sought an assessment by the UNCDP for LDC status, had sought support for their request in advance from both the United Nations Economic and Social Council and the United Nations General Assembly<sup>53</sup>. In the UNCDP’s 1984-5 session the status of these three countries was reviewed on the basis of updated data against the criteria. On the basis of these assessments, the Committee determined that Vanuatu was eligible for inclusion on the list, ‘on the basis of the existing criteria, and in the light of the available data’ (UNCDP 1984-1985: para 115). The Committee refrained from making a final determination on the status of Kiribati and Tuvalu, reporting that the Committee was

...sceptical of the existing criteria for the determination of eligibility of countries for inclusion in the list of the least developed countries.

Furthermore, it is the considered opinion of the Committee that, if it is to be meaningful, the establishment of a new set of criteria must involve a clear definition of the purpose that the list of the least developed countries is meant to serve. (UNCDP 1985: para 116)

This clearly articulated reticence by the UNCDP to make a determination was not accepted and again the cases of Kiribati and Tuvalu, two of the Pacific’s ‘micro-states’, were brought to the Committee’s attention for consideration in the Committee’s twenty-second session the following year<sup>54</sup>. On this occasion, they were recommended for inclusion on the list of LDCs.

---

<sup>52</sup> The Committee for Development Planning also notes “Adverse developments in the production and exports of iron ore and other products have contributed to a large outflow of capital, a decline in the rate of investment and the near collapse of the financial system” (ibid: para 161). There is no mention of internal conflict, the breakdown of law and order and the loss of legitimacy to the state.

<sup>53</sup> See United Nations Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/58 of 26 July 1984 and the General Assembly, resolution 39/198 of 17 December 1984.

<sup>54</sup> The case of Mauritania was also brought to the Committee this year at the request of a General Assembly resolution and a decision of the Economic and Social Council. See United Nations General Assembly resolution 40/219 of 17 December 1985 and the Economic and Social Council Official Records, decision 103 of 7 February 1986.

During this assessment the Committee had, as in previous assessments, determined the specific information that would be used to benchmark LDC criteria, and adjusted the lower and upper limits of the per capita GDP criterion to reflect movements in the international economy (at this time the limits were set at \$353-423). Data from Kiribati identified that the per capita GDP was \$300 (phosphate mining had just ceased due to the exhaustion of supplies of the mineral in the territory). The per capita GDP in Tuvalu was \$400, and in Mauritania per capita GDP had declined since 1981 when it was over \$400, to \$320 in 1985. The inclusion of these aspects of the committee's consideration is not to imply in this case that the GDP per capita criterion was the sole socio-economic data considered by the Committee. The descriptions of the three states in the Committee's report detail numerous issues. For example in the case of Kiribati, national geography as a small island state comprising 21 isolated coral atolls, a highly dispersed population of 65,000, a lack of a skilled labour force, low levels of literacy, dependence on copra and remittances as the major economic structure, high costs of public infrastructure and service delivery, and prevalence of geographic disasters such as hurricanes and cyclones were all noted by the Committee in their consideration of Kiribati as a LDC.

The methods of specific information and increasingly specialised procedures and processes for determining LDC status against the LDC criteria as the key ways the technology of knowledge operate are seen throughout the UNCDP's assessments of country status. The discursive boundaries are revealed as narrow, and despite the Committee's stated concern about the limits of the criteria, information and the processes remain limited. The case of Zambia, considered in 1987 and 1988 reveals that despite a significant and dramatic deterioration in the country's socio-economic status, because it does not currently conform to the criteria, it was not recommended for inclusion in the list<sup>55</sup>. This decision is made recognising and noting that in addition to significant impact of price deteriorations in the main export, copper, Zambian physical infrastructure is in a state of disrepair, industry was operating at around 40 per cent of capacity, the debt service ratio is estimated at over 100 percent and economic reform measures were not producing anticipated positive effects. This decision is made despite the potential, however remote, that any available benefits for being in the category could ameliorate the current situation and decline. The discursive boundaries of the category are not permitted to consider any preventive measures for countries not yet within the current scope of LDC criteria.

---

<sup>55</sup> The Committee notes that no improvement in Zambia's economic position has taken place since the previous sitting of the Committee, and indications were that the economic situation was deteriorating significantly. However, the Committee determined that 'the existing LDC criteria and procedures for their application did not warrant the inclusion of that country in the list' (UNCDP 1988: para 141). The Committee's concern at the inflexibility of the LDC criteria and agreed procedures is very clear, and indicates that with new data the committee would willingly reconsider Zambia's eligibility for inclusion in the LDC list. The Committee for Development Planning notes that the significant economic driver in the Zambian economy, the price of copper, had retained high prices over the previous twelve months while GDP had declined. This was of particular concern to the Committee for Development Planning as it had been projected that copper prices were likely to drop, and the annual levels of copper production in Zambia was not likely to increase.

Namibia is another case in point about the discursive boundaries of the operation of the technology of knowledge, classification into criteria. In 1991 the UNCDP assessed Namibia, then a newly independent nation, at the request of the General Assembly (UNCDP 1991).<sup>56</sup> In reviewing the data, the Committee came to the view that while recognising the existence of significant income inequality within Namibia, the average GDP per capita, combined with the strength of the natural resource base and adult literacy rates meant that it could not be classified as an LDC at that point in time. This is despite acknowledgement of the significant inequality in the distribution of GDP per capita<sup>57</sup>. A further example of discursive boundaries limiting analysis and decisions about LDC status is identified in the cases of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, considered for LDC status in the 1992 session of the UNCDP. The Committee determined that neither country met the criteria. What is of interest with this discussion is that the Committee did note that both countries were extremely dependent on overseas aid. This aid dollar dependence was not a factor identified within the LDC criteria or the processes for assessment, and so accordingly despite its significance as a development issue, is outside the scope for consideration in assessing the economic vulnerability of these two countries.

Again in 2003, with the Committee's decision to include Timor Leste on the basis of its very low HAI and Gross National Income (GNI) statistics, no attention was accorded to conflict and violence in constructing the country's socio-economic situation. In assessing the country against the LDC criteria the UNCDP noted the level of GNI per capita was \$478 and the HAI was 36.4, both well below the cut-off points for inclusion in the category least developed country. The level of economic vulnerability could not be calculated, as the required data was not available. The Committee did not note the history of violent Indonesian invasion and colonialism, or the violence and conflict that was associated with the move to independence (Inbaraj 1995)<sup>58</sup>. These again, were issues outside the scope of consideration, outside the discursive boundaries of the LDC criteria and were excluded by the technology of knowledge, classification into criteria.

This discussion has highlighted the way that the technology of knowledge classification into criteria operates when considering countries for inclusion in the LDC category. The UNCDP's reliance on specific information and processes operate within established discursive boundaries. These limits are revealed

---

<sup>56</sup> See General Assembly Resolution 25/198 1991

<sup>57</sup> The Committee does record its recognition that average GDP – estimated at between \$960 and \$1,450 – is not a strong indicator of the income status of the majority of the population:

The Committee took note of the fact that the income distribution of the country is highly skewed and that the average per capita income of the non-white population engaged in traditional activities could be as low as \$65. (UNCDP 1991: para 262)

<sup>58</sup> Inbaraj documents the toll of the conflict and violence in Timor Leste on the population in the lead up to independence:

Catholic clergy, Timorese refugees, and foreign aid workers estimate that at least 200,000 Timorese died in military actions or from starvation and illness in the period 1976-80. Some estimates run as high as 230,000 out of a pre-invasion population of some 650,000. (Inbaraj 1995: 68)

through examination of the records of UNCDP meetings where it becomes clear that issues such as civil conflict, invasion and dependence on development assistance are not recognised appropriately, if at all, as critical issues affecting country status that could be included in the country assessment processes. The productive nature of the category itself is also clear in the way in which the anticipated benefits are a driver for some countries to seek inclusion for many years. This dynamic is stronger than any recognition that there are weaknesses in the LDC criteria, and that the benefits that could accrue to countries with LDC status are insufficient to make a significant impact on national development prospects.

### **General reviews: graduating from category LDC**

In this section I turn to a second part of the Committee's work, reviewing the list of LDC countries in entirety. This is a process that has led to recommendations for countries to graduate from the group. The ways in which the Committee determines this process are explored through the cases of Vanuatu and The Maldives, which were considered over several years. This demonstrates that a second way that the technology of knowledge classification into criteria operates is through the specialised processes and procedures and recommendations used in the conduct of these general reviews of all countries on the LDC list. As with country case-by-case assessments, specific upper and lower limits were set for LDC criteria benchmark data for countries to join or graduate from the category. A specific process was also established for countries that were identified as having the socio-economic status that no longer accorded inclusion in the category. The detailed records of the UNCDP indicate how much effort was involved in undertaking these reviews. They are the main substance of discussion in each of the sessions of the UNCDP when these reviews occur. These reviews are the product of the discursive limits established by the LDC category and the technology of knowledge classification into criteria. Each assessment process in each of these general reviews takes the criteria as they are established, and does not include any further information, country context or data. Needless to say gender analysis is not a part of these general reviews, and the lack of it highlights the discursive boundaries operating in this technology of knowledge.

It was in 1994 that the UN General Assembly first recommended that a general review of the entire list of countries within and outside the category to be conducted every three years. This review was to recommend the inclusion or graduation of countries from the LDC category outside of specific requests from different countries. The first of these general reviews occurred during the Twenty-Ninth Session of the UNCDP in 1994. As a result of the assessments, the Committee recommended that two countries be added to this list, Angola and Eritrea. This general review also determined that all countries that were within the grouping should remain, with the exception of Botswana and Vanuatu. A specific process was developed to assess countries for 'graduation' from the LDC category. After the initial assessment that the country met criteria for graduation, it would be notified and then would be re-assessed again in three years time at the next general review. Botswana had previously been recommended for graduation from the category, and this was confirmed by Botswana. Vanuatu had not been recommended for graduation from the category previously, so it was expected that a three-year waiting period should commence during which Vanuatu's context

would be examined closely with a view to a stronger recommendation on graduation being formulated at the end of the three-year period.

The next general review by the UNCDP of the LDC countries took place in 1997 and confirmed that the majority of countries on the list should remain within the category<sup>59</sup>. The review identified five countries to be recommended for graduation from the list. Vanuatu, recommended for graduation from the category in the previous review in 1994, was recommended for graduation again. The rationale for this second recommendation included the general stability of the country, an improved performance in GDP and positive indicators on the augmented physical quality of life index. The other countries recommended for graduation were Maldives, Samoa, Cape Verde and Myanmar, data from all of which placed them past the thresholds for graduation against all indicators. The Committee recommended that all four should remain on the list for the next three years, and be formally assessed for graduation at the time of the next general review in 2000. The recommendation on Vanuatu was not accepted by Vanuatu, and Vanuatu has remained regularly reviewed and included on the list of LDCs.

In 2000, the UNCDP<sup>60</sup> undertook a further review of the list of LDCs. This review was based on an assessment of 67 countries, including all currently classified as LDCs<sup>61</sup>. In the assessment process, the Committee determined that the cut-off level for inclusion in the category should be \$900 GDP per capita. The cut-off point for the APQLI was set at 59, and for the EVI was set at 36. For graduation from the category, the cut-off points were set at 15% more than the inclusion cut-off point for the GDP per capita and the APQLI, and 15% lower than the inclusion cut-off point for the EVI<sup>62</sup>. In terms of countries identified as meeting the thresholds for graduation from the category, the Committee assessed Vanuatu, Samoa, Cape Verde and the Maldives<sup>63</sup>. Vanuatu had been assessed

---

<sup>59</sup> In assessing countries currently not within the LDC category, the UNCDP did not recommend any countries for inclusion in the list in the 1997 review. The country that was assessed most closely for inclusion in the grouping was Cameroon. The Committee reported that this was in large part due to a sharp decline in GDP due to fifty percent currency devaluation. Despite this dramatic decline in economic stability, the Committee recommended that Cameroon not be included in the list as it still had strong export performance, despite its major export concentration in a single product, petroleum.

<sup>60</sup> The UN Committee for Development Planning became the UN Committee for Development Policy in 1999, with the first session taking of the new Committee taking place on 26-30 April 1999.

<sup>61</sup> The other countries included in the list used in the review were countries that had been classified as low-income countries by the World Bank.

<sup>62</sup> In terms of additional factors highlighted in this 2000 review, the key one is about the population size limit for inclusion in the LDC grouping. This was highlighted by the examination of Nigeria during the review, which met each of the criteria for inclusion in the category with the exception of the restriction on population size. The Committee noted that Bangladesh was included in the category in the very early days of its existence, prior to the introduction of a limit on population size, to ensure that the category was focused on countries with small economies. The Committee also noted that Bangladesh did not meet the criteria for graduating from the category.

<sup>63</sup> With Samoa, the assessment identified that it only met one of the criteria for graduation from the category, as there had been an economic stagnation and GDP per capita had

several times previously by the Committee, but with the new criteria and cut-off points adopted for this review Vanuatu only met one of the thresholds for graduation from the category: its' per capita GDP of \$1,400 was well above the cut-off point of \$1035 per capita GDP. On both the APQLI and the EVI, Vanuatu was below the graduation cut-off point. Accordingly, the Committee determined that Vanuatu should remain classified as a LDC. This is particularly noteworthy, as it is when a broader range of socio-economic information is included in the criteria and analysis that a fuller analysis of the development context and challenges facing Vanuatu can be undertaken by the Committee in this review and country assessment, and as a result of this broader analysis, Vanuatu remains within the LDC category. This review also assessed countries for inclusion in the category, and in this session identified that the Congo met the criteria for inclusion. However the Committee decided not to recommend its inclusion, based on the view that the key factor in its social and economic deterioration was civil war, and the volatility of national income as a result of its reliance on oil exports. This was an example where the impact of civil war was recognised, but because it was not in the criteria the Congo was not recommended for inclusion.

The case of the Maldives is of interest as the resistance expressed by the Maldives challenged the discursive boundaries of what issues are relevant for consideration by the UNCDP. While the UNCDP had been undertaking country assessments for inclusion and graduation from the category, it had not once considered the potential impact that a change out of LDC status would have in general, or in any particular country. It is in the 2000 review that the UNCDP determined that the Maldives met all three criteria for graduation from the category and recommended that it no longer be included on the list of LDCs. This recommendation was re-assessed during the UNCDP's 2001 session, prompted in large part by the concerns expressed by the Government of the Maldives about the negative impact on their national economy if they were to lose their LDC classification. ECOSOC did not support the UNCDP's recommendation that the Maldives leave the LDC category, based on the concerns expressed by the government of the Maldives. In the decision not to support this recommendation, ECOSOC made four requests of the

---

declined, and as a small island developing state, it had a very low rank on the EVI. As a result of this assessment, Samoa retained its LDC status. In terms of Cape Verde, the Committee noted that while it met two threshold criteria for leaving the category, namely GDP per capita and the APQLI, it was one of the most vulnerable countries according to the EVI. As a result, the Committee determined that no recommendation should be made about Cape Verde leaving the category but that it should be re-examined at the next full review. As a result of this 2000 review, three new countries were identified for potential inclusion in the LDC category: the Congo, Ghana and Senegal. In the case of Ghana, the Committee noted that it had been identified as eligible to be included in the list in 1994, and decided that it would not accept the offer to become a member of the LDC group. In the case of Senegal, the Committee noted it was 'well below the thresholds for inclusion on both the GDP per capita and the APQLI, and is more than 10 per cent above the EVI threshold' (UNCDP 2000: para 93). Out of the three countries identified as potential new LDC, only Senegal was recommended by the Committee to proceed for endorsement by the Economic and Social Council, and it has determined that it will not be included in the list. The Government of Senegal supported the Committee's recommendation that it be classified as a LDC, and accordingly the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted this recommendation in 2001.

UNCDP: firstly, that it review its decision; secondly that work be undertaken to identify ways in which a smooth transition could be made from LDC status; thirdly, that it examine the benefits of LDC status in general, and the impact of these on the Maldives in particular; and fourthly, that it assess the formal statement of concern submitted by the Government of the Maldives to the Economic and Social Council on this issue.

The response of the UNCDP to this ECOSOC request is interesting and demonstrates again the discursive limits of the LDC category and the technology of knowledge, classification into criteria. The UNCDP determined in its re-assessment in 2001 that the Maldives no longer met LDC criteria. Concerns about environmental vulnerability and the threat of rising sea levels raised by the government of the Maldives were acknowledged as development challenges, but as the issue was outside the scope of the LDC criteria it had no impact on the UNCDP's decision-making process<sup>64</sup>. UNCDP consultations with development partners in 2002 identified that donor behaviour was determined by other factors, not LDC status<sup>65</sup>.

A number of bilateral partners indicated that the context of graduation would have little, if any, impact on their treatment of graduating countries in terms of aid flows and technical assistance, because these have not been necessarily allocated on the basis of least developed country status...(UNCDP 2002: para 164).

The UNCDP identified that the major impact of the change from LDC status was identified as resulting from trade related concessions and preferences. It was clear, particularly within the WTO framework, that there were specific concessions available to LDCs. On the whole these related to longer time frames to implement requirements of specific agreements, specific technical assistance and the availability of concessions<sup>66</sup>. The UNCDP focused its discussion about a transition period, and determined to re-assess the Maldives in 2003 as part of the next scheduled general review. The 2003 general review identified the Maldives again

---

<sup>64</sup> The UNCDP assessment in 2001 did assess the vulnerability profile of the country, which determined that the country was highly vulnerable, but continued with its previous recommendation that rather than seeing this as a rationale for retaining LDC status, the Maldives receive special assistance to address its concerns about environmental vulnerability particularly in relation to rising sea levels.

<sup>65</sup> The consultation process in gathering information from key development partners and assessing the potential negative implications for the Maldives if it graduated from the LDC category was underway during the fourth session of the UNCDP in 2002. In terms of the issue of a smooth transition, it was recommended that both a meeting of experts and a roundtable of key development partners be convened to develop strategies to support the country through the phase post-graduation from LDC status. The initial information available to the Committee providing an overview of the benefits of inclusion in the category showed that losing LDC classification would in actual fact make little difference to the level of assistance provided.

<sup>66</sup> For example, LDCs have seven years to eliminate trade-related investment measures that are not in accordance with the Agreement of Trade-Related Investment Measures, while developing countries have a transitional period of five years. A second example is that LDCs have an automatic exemption from the requirement to eliminate all subsidies on exports. This also applies to countries outside the LDC category, but only if per capita income is below \$1000.

as a country for ‘graduation’ from the LDC category<sup>67</sup>. This was the third time Maldives has been assessed and identified as meeting the criteria cut-off points. The Government of the Maldives, who are continuing to argue that their country cannot afford to lose the benefits that have been accorded with the LDC status, has still not accepted this UNCDP decision. At the request of the Economic and Social Council, the 2004 session of the Committee reviewed the decision to recommend that the Maldives met the criteria for graduation, and confirmed this recommendation (UNCDP 2004: para 1-4)<sup>68</sup>. The discussions generated by this continued concern of the Maldives are ongoing, and were a feature of the UNCDP’s 2004 session<sup>69</sup>. The repeated challenges by the Maldives to the UNCDP decision produced the first assessment by the Committee of the impact of leaving the category on a particular country context and development prospects. The narrow discursive limits still ensured that only information linked to the criteria was privileged and considered relevant. Information and issues outside the discursive boundaries of the LDC category criteria remained outside scope of analysis. The technology of knowledge functions by privileging the maintenance of the structure, composition and ‘integrity’ of the criteria above challenges to the discursive boundaries of the LDC category.

This specialised information and processes for analysis and assessment that are the methods for how the technology of knowledge operates can be seen in detail in each of the reviews. In the 2003 general review the UNCDP examined a list of sixty-five countries and assessed all current LDCs and some other low-income countries against the criteria, assessing them against the thresholds for inclusion and graduation. The three criteria were used in the assessment. The first criterion, gross national income per capita, was set at a three-year average of \$750 for

---

<sup>67</sup> In terms of the countries identified for consideration for graduation both Cape Verde and Maldives were above the thresholds for graduation with the HAI, with respective scores of 72 and 65.2 respectively. Both countries also had high GNI per capita, with Cape Verde at \$1,323 and Maldives at \$1,983. This is the second time Cape Verde has met the criteria cut-off points, and accordingly it was recommended for graduation. The other countries that were identified as meeting two criteria cut-off points, the requirement for graduation from the least developed country category, were Samoa, Kiribati and Tuvalu. As this was the first time Samoa had met these criteria, it was recommended that the country be re-examined at the 2006 review to see if it continues to meet these criteria, at which point it should be recommended to graduate from the LDC category. Neither Kiribati nor Tuvalu has met the criteria for graduation previously. The Committee noted that both were “the two most economically vulnerable countries in the initial list according to the EVI” (UNCDP 2003: para 23).

<sup>68</sup> Cape Verde was also reconsidered and identified again by the UNCDP at its 2004 session as a country that no longer met the criteria for inclusion in the LDC category.

<sup>69</sup> In its 2004 discussion about the potential negative impact on countries leaving the category, the UNCDP noted a report provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat on the concerns expressed by countries about the impact of the loss of benefits associated with inclusion in the category. The Committee recommended that the broad international community develop broader strategies to address a smooth transition for countries graduating from the category, particularly small-island developing States. These views were confirmed by the UNCDP’s 2004 session, with a proposal to form an ‘Ad hoc country advisory group’ comprising all key stakeholders for a particular country, who would work on strategies to support transition from LDC status upon initial identification by the Committee, as a pre-graduation initiative, and in the post-graduation period.



inclusion and a three-year average of \$900 for graduation. The Human Assets Index (HAI) was set at 55, with a 10 percent variation for graduation, set at 61. The Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI) was included twice, with the inclusion in the second version of data on the number of people displaced by natural disasters. The threshold for inclusion was set at 37, and the 10 per cent variation for graduation was set at 33. In the version of the EVI that included the number of people displaced by natural disasters, the threshold for inclusion was set at 38, and the threshold for graduation was set at 34.

The general reviews of LDC countries against the criteria have developed specialized processes and procedures, reliant on specific information. A major dynamic within these reviews is the identification of countries to 'graduate' from the category, recommendations that are rarely welcomed by countries themselves. Examination of the UNCDP meeting records has identified that in the function of general reviews, the technology of knowledge classification into criteria operates in the following three ways: information outside the discursive boundaries established by the criteria is not considered relevant; the purpose of the category is paramount above concerns expressed by countries about their own development future if excluded from the grouping; and the processes and procedures used in analysis are privileged above difficulties faced by countries outside the grouping in addressing national socio-economic challenges. These three characteristics of the operation of this technology of knowledge are products of the discursive boundaries of category LDC, and underscore the limitations to the analysis produced by the UNCDP in administering the LDC criteria. The limits established by the LDC discourse are so closed that it is only upon specific request that the UNCDP notes that there may be an impact on countries shifting out of the LDC category. The UNCDP records reveal that recommendations for countries to graduate from the category are being made on the basis of narrow, mechanistic assessments against defined criteria without a full and broad analysis of their development challenges and socio-economic context. The discussion in this section has highlighted the cases of Vanuatu and the Maldives to demonstrate the significance of the discursive boundaries established within the criteria as they operate through this technology of knowledge, classification into criteria. What becomes clear is that the technology of knowledge classification into criteria has made the criteria themselves such a focus of the discourse that the information they draw on and the processes and procedures the UNCDP use in analysis and application are considered of greater importance than any other identifiable development issue or country context.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that the modes of operation of the LDC category, through its creation and definition by the UN, to the administration of its membership by the UNCDP, occur within a discursive environment and context that limits analysis and understanding of the complexity of development. The chapter commenced by locating the production of LDC category and the body charged with administering it, the UNCDP, as discursive products of the UN and its discourse of liberal humanism and modernisation as development. The chapter then proceeded with a close examination of the work of the UNCDP over twenty years, 1981-2004, with a

focus on the representation of women and the administrative processes developed and applied in country assessments. The chapter identified that the LDC criteria themselves are gendered, with no scope for inclusion of information about gender dynamics and the status of women. Despite three reviews of the criteria, this gendered basis has not been challenged or changed. The chapter then traces the appearances of references to women in the UNCDP's discussions of LDC development context. What becomes clear is that there are three ways in which this occurs. The first is always in context of another topic or discussion, never on its own terms. This is examined through a discussion of the first references to women in the 1988 and 1989 UNCDP sessions, which were arguing for the introduction of a human capabilities approach to development, as opposed to an economics based modernisation model. The second way in which the UNCDP discussion includes references to women is through transitory or fleeting mentions, which are not followed up even in the same session's discussion let alone in future meetings. The final way in which references to women are made is through the use of reductionist, homogenizing essentialist representations of LDC women as passive victims or potential agents. These three ways in which women are represented in the UNCDP discussions are explored with detailed examples from the UNCDP sessions 1988 to 2004. It is clear that despite the length of time, there is no change in the discursive marginality assigned to gender analysis and the relevance of women to development context, policy and praxis in LDC development discourse. I argue that this is a result of the marginality of gender within the LDC criteria.

The chapter then outlines the ways in which the LDC category, as a product of UN development discourse and liberal humanism, is itself productive through the perceived benefits attached to membership. This discussion is followed by a detailed discussion of the ways the UNCDP administers the LDC category. The gender analysis of the representation of women in UNCDP discussions revealed discursive boundaries of what information is identified as relevant or not within the administration of the LDC category. This limitation to the analysis of LDCs is apparent in the analysis of the UNCDP's administration of LDC category. This chapter explores this through the UNCDP's discursive boundaries of relevant information included in country assessments as part of the processes of assessing countries for inclusion in the LDC group. This was explored in relation to several country case studies, including Liberia and East Timor, where information such as significant civil conflict or instability was excluded from the sphere of relevant information. The discussion of the dynamics of UNCDP's administration of graduating from the LDC category has a particular focus on the case studies of Vanuatu and the Maldives, both of which are resistant to the recommendations to leave the group. What is clear in these discussions of the UNCDP's administration of the LDC category is the way in which the LDC criteria act to inform and set limits on what information is considered relevant in these assessments. Through this process of administration, the processes of administration become ever more elaborate and detailed, creating and requiring specific knowledge and information. The LDC criteria and the processes by which they are applied become a significant focus of the UNCDP's work, rather than the broader objective of alleviating poverty.

In examining the records of the UNCDP in detail, this chapter has sought to identify the ways in which the technology of knowledge, classification into criteria, operates within the development discourse of category LDC. Gender analysis identified the discursive limits of the category LDC, and the way that the criteria and the category itself become a focus. It also identified that when gender analysis was undertaken, the analysis was transitory, was always marginal and relied on conceptual homogeneity of women in LDC countries as victims and/or passive recipients of development assistance. This analysis demonstrated that gender analysis is a critical tool in identifying and revealing boundaries to the LDC category discourse, and the operations of the technology of knowledge classification into criteria. The discursive boundaries of category LDC criteria were explored further through an examination of three ways in which the criteria are used within the discourse: in country assessments, in general reviews of the list of LDCs, and in reviews of the criteria themselves. This established that these technologies of knowledge operate by focusing on increasingly specific information and developing and refining processes, procedures and protocols for analysis. These characteristics not only fundamentally inhibit the analysis produced by the UNCDP about LDCs, but also limit the information considered within scope of relevance. In examining the records of the reviews of the criteria themselves, what is apparent is that the existence of the category justifies its own existence, data availability determines what information is considered valid, the processes of reviews and becomes the focus of the UNCDP, and any changes that are made do not alter the core boundaries of the category. The discursive boundaries are set, and produce ever more elaborate and complex information and knowledge about the criteria, rather than about the dynamics of development challenges facing the LDCs themselves.