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Available online: 01 Jul 2010

To cite this article: Naila Kabeer (1995): Targeting women or transforming institutions?, Development in Practice, 5:2, 108-116

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0961452951000157084

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Targeting women or transforming institutions?
Policy lessons from NGO anti-poverty efforts

Naila Kabeer

While inequalities between men and women have long been recognised in formal development policies, poverty-alleviation schemes generally display a discrepancy between their declared commitment to equity for women and their actual achievements in incorporating the insights of gender analysis. This article explores the experience of NGOs which have successfully incorporated gender-awareness into the formulation of anti-poverty interventions. It shows that increasing poor women’s organisational experience is critical to ensuring that their needs and views inform the planning process. The article concludes that, unless women are empowered to move beyond the ‘project trap’, and to take part in formulating policy and allocating resources, they will continue to be a marginalised category in development.

The case for gender-awareness in anti-poverty programmes

The incorporation of a gender-based perspective into research on development issues has established the significance of gender as a central dimension of poverty. There is persuasive evidence to show that women are disproportionately represented among the poorer sections of the world’s population, and that households maintained by women tend on balance to be poorer than households whose primary breadwinner is male. There is also evidence which suggests that women are making up an increasing proportion of the poor, and this is leading to a ‘feminisation of poverty’. Thus a major report by IFAD on rural poverty (still accounting for the major share of the world’s poor) points out that

The total number of rural women living below the poverty line in developing countries was estimated in 1988 to be 564 million. This represented an increase of 47% above the numbers in 1965-70, as compared with 30% for rural men below the poverty line. (Jazairy et al. 1992, p. 273)

While the changing distribution of poverty is often an aspect of broader events and processes (natural disaster, wars, depletion of environmental resources, or unjust macro-economic policies), it is always mediated by the institutionalised structures of rules, norms, entitlements, and practices which shape individual access to resources within given societies. Gender-related dimensions of poverty arise from a combination of interlocking systems of disadvantage embedded in these various social institutions.
Disadvantage in the private and public domains

Research on intra-household relations has revealed the asymmetrical distribution of resources and responsibilities embedded in domestic norms, and pointed to its implications for men and women’s access to broader market-based opportunities (Standing, 1991; Bruce and Dwyer, 1988; Palmer, 1977). Other research has explored the extent to which market-based institutions are themselves sites of gender-based discrimination, so that women tend to be less successful than men in translating their labour and education into command over income and purchasing power (Beneria and Roldan, 1987; Humphrey, 1987; Appleton et al. 1990; Amsden, 1980). Unfair advantages for men within domestic and market institutions interact with inequalities created by class relations, to ensure that women in poverty are generally among the most disenchanted sections of society. At the same time, these institutions do not lend themselves easily to attempts to alter their internal dynamics in the interests of equalising the positions of women and men. Thus, whole households are frequently targeted as the front-line implementing agencies in a range of schemes that aim to increase productivity and reduce poverty. Most policy-makers are reluctant to be seen to be intervening directly in intra-household norms and relations: the ‘private’ domain. In as much as market-based institutions belong in the public domain, they may be seen as more acceptable sites for public intervention. But here again there is reluctance in many quarters to interfere with market forces, for fear of distorting price signals and the efficient allocation of resources.

It is therefore primarily through the efforts of the State, as well as formal and informal organisations within the community, that anti-poverty schemes are formulated and implemented. Within these, attention to women’s needs has not always been a priority or even a consideration. Early efforts tended to be formulated for broad generic categories of people: the community, the poor, the landless. The possibility that women — and children — within these categories might not benefit equally with men from these efforts was rarely considered. However, with the advance of a Women in Development (WID) constituency within the development community, these neglected questions began to be explored. A two-fold case was made for the specific targeting of women: that women were among the poorest of the poor; and that resources in the hands of women were more likely to be shared fairly within the household than those in men’s hands (Bruce and Dwyer, 1988; Palmer, 1977).

‘Women’s projects’ and integrated projects

Initially this new awareness was translated into policy in the form of income-generating projects for women. However, a decade of experience has shown that women-specific projects will do little to challenge the marginal place assigned to women within development as long as the norms, practices, and procedures which guide the overall development effort remain fundamentally unchanged. Instead, women-only income-generating activities serve to perpetuate a form of segregation within development polices, with productivity-related efforts targeted at men, and welfare-related efforts targeted at women (Rogers 1980). The labelling of certain projects as ‘women’s projects’ has also given women as a category an exaggerated visibility in the policy rhetoric, one that is not matched by the actual share of development budgets invested in such projects. The absence of the corresponding label of ‘men’s projects’ disguises the fact that by far the largest proportion of development resources continues to be invested in schemes which directly benefit men. While women may (or may not) receive indirect benefits from such schemes, the fact remains that these schemes
are generally drawn up without any consideration of the existing gender-based division of tasks, activities, and rewards. The extent to which such schemes achieve their full productive potential and the extent to which their benefits are fairly distributed among household or community members are consequently a matter of assumption and speculation, not properly grounded analysis.

The success of policy efforts to address the problems of women in poverty is emphatically not about separate versus integrated interventions, since different circumstances warrant different approaches. Rather, a gender-aware approach to the design of anti-poverty programmes and projects requires that policy-makers are clear, consistent, and well-informed about the relevance of gender in specific contexts to their goals, objectives, and strategies. This will allow them to explore and select from a range of old and new options in their attempts to ensure equal opportunities in anti-poverty programmes, rather than engaging in futile debates over women-only versus integrated projects.

Some important progress in this field has been made by a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), sometimes working in partnership with local or national government. The innovative nature of these NGOs does not necessarily imply greater sensitivity to women’s needs and potential from their inception. Rather it reflects their greater flexibility, compared with the more rule-bound culture of most bureaucracies, and consequently their greater ability to respond to the lessons of experience. It also reflects their routine face-to-face interactions with their grassroots constituencies, compared with the more remote, formalised modelling exercises undertaken in the upper echelons of bureaucratically-managed planning institutions. This closer contact with the everyday realities of poverty has allowed some NGOs to adopt a process-based approach to policy design, rather than the rigid ‘blueprint’ approach which characterises conventional planning. In the rest of this article, I want to draw on the experiences of a number of NGOs from the South Asian context, in order to identify some key pointers for ensuring greater gender-awareness in the formulation of anti-poverty interventions. Although these examples relate to one geographical area, I believe that the lessons they offer have a much broader application. In addition, while I am here focusing on the gender-related dimension of policy design, I believe that the discussion here can offer lessons for ‘good practice’ in policy efforts in addressing all forms of marginalisation.

**Participation and needs-identification**

Poverty-reduction programmes are generally seen in terms of meeting the basic needs of those who lack the resources to do so for themselves. They may be designed to meet such needs either directly, through the provision of basic goods and services, or indirectly by improving people’s entitlements to basic resources. The first step in the design of poverty-alleviation programmes is thus establishing what constitutes ‘basic needs’ in a given context, and identifying priorities among them.

This is not a neutral process: which needs are recognised, whose priorities are adopted, and consequently whose participation can be relied upon further ‘downstream’ in the policy process are all critically dependent on how planners go about the business of needs-identification. Women’s needs and priorities have suffered in many conventional poverty-alleviation efforts, because the preconceptions of those responsible for the design of programmes have often led them to impose their own definitions of what women need. Either women’s needs are subsumed (and then forgotten) under the collective needs of the household, or, when they are addressed separately, they tend to be those associated with their roles as mothers, wives, and carers within the family. That women, like men, may value
interventions which increase their self-esteem, their control over their own labour, or their sense of being active rather than passive is seldom allowed to surface in poverty-reduction schemes.

What emerges from the experience of the more innovative NGOs is that, where a space is created for women’s own voices to be heard, a very different set of needs may emerge. This space can be created by encouraging women to participate in the process of identifying a community’s needs. It can also be created by operating with an open rather than closed agenda, so that organisational practice is constantly monitored and revised in the light of experience.

The case of Grameen Bank
An early example of a more participatory approach to needs identification comes from Grameen Bank (Huq and Sultan, 1991). This has its origins in an action-research project in the early 1970s which helped to counter many conventional preconceptions about the rural poor which were enshrined in the development literature in Bangladesh: that they were primarily waged labourers; that their poverty resulted from a shortage of waged employment; and that they were (implicitly) men. What the action research revealed instead was that the rural poor earned their livelihoods from a variety of self-employed activities, rather than relying primarily on waged labour; that they were women as well as men; and that their major constraint was perceived not as the lack of agricultural wage labour, but lack of access to mainstream financial organisations. Grameen was set up as a poverty-reduction programme to deliver credit to this excluded group. From a fairly early stage it focused most of its efforts on landless women, whom it found to be a better credit risk. Women, it also turned out, were more likely to use their credit to improve their family’s welfare, rather than their own. The Bank now enjoys higher repayment rates than most official credit schemes for poor people in the region.

A women’s sanitation project
In the case of the Grameen Bank, the primary need identified was an economic one, dealing with the inadequacy of financial entitlements. Encouraging women to take part in the process of needs identification may also help to identify hitherto hidden welfare needs of women. An example of this comes from SEWA (Self-Employed Women’s Association), a trade union initially started to organise self-employed women in urban Gujerat in India. Here, participatory action research carried out before SEWA’s entry into rural areas uncovered previously hidden health needs. Inadequate sanitation facilities meant that most of the poorer villagers had to use open spaces (Jumani, 1993). This posed particular problems for women who, in the interests of modesty, were forced to use the fields under cover of darkness, either early in the morning or late in the evening. Cases of rape were common in the spaces kept aside for toilet facilities, while long delays before relieving themselves caused bowel and bladder problems for women. Indeed, the low priority, the shame, and the embarrassment invested in women’s bodies in many societies have given rise to the wider problems described by Mary Kiseska (1989) as a ‘culture of silence’ concerning women’s sexual, reproductive, and general health questions.

A women’s housing project
From an urban context comes the example of SPARC (Bapat and Patel, 1992), which works with those sections of the urban poor who live in hovels on the pavements of Bombay. These are people for whom the ‘ordinary’ problems of poverty are exacerbated by the constant threat of demolition which they face from the municipal authorities. Through a series of public meetings held with the pavement dwellers in 1986-87, both women and men within the community recognised that shelter was one
of women’s key concerns and responsibilities: it was women who made a pavement dwelling into a home; women who had to deal with demolitions, which normally occurred while the men were out at work; and women who expressed the need for secure shelter as a first priority, mainly for the sake of their children and grandchildren. SPARC’s programmes of popular education based on housing are consequently conducted primarily with women pavement dwellers.

To sum up, participatory approaches to needs-identification should not be seen as a question of the ‘right’ methods and techniques alone, but also about the possibilities created for democratic participation in the process of needs-identification. No set of methods are in themselves sensitive to differences and inequalities between men and women; each method is only as good as its practitioner. It can be argued that the qualitative, dynamic, and interactive methodology advocated by Participatory Rural Appraisal makes it more likely to challenge gender-linked stereotyping about needs and opportunities (the men = production/women = welfare formula) and to uncover categories of needs which might remain submerged in more conventional approaches to policy design. At the same time, SPARC has used quantitative techniques to generate information about the needs of the ‘invisibilised’ poor, both to the public and to the authorities. At the start of its activities, it conducted a ‘people’s census’ to enumerate pavement dwellers (a group routinely left out of conventional censuses), both as a strategy to mobilise the pavement dwellers, and as a way of mobilising public opinion against mass demolitions. The active creation of an information base to mobilise people was later adopted as a methodology by the National Slum Dwellers’ Federation; collective enumeration also forms a key tool in SPARC’s training methodology.

Participation and needs-satisfaction

Identifying needs is clearly only one aspect of the planning process. A major factor behind women’s disenfranchisement from most conventional institutions of development is that, except where the resources in question correspond specifically to ‘women’s roles’, these institutions, implicitly or explicitly, target men. Here the more innovative NGOs, by adapting their operating rules, practices, and procedures to take account, not just of women’s needs, but also of the constraints which often prevent them from claiming their fair share of resources, have sought to compensate for the fact that many conventional programmes exclude women. These NGOs’ own rules and procedures embody a very different set of assumptions about potential ‘beneficiaries’, recognising in particular that the unequal division of resources and responsibilities within the household is likely to constrain women’s access to resources, services and opportunities distributed through conventional market or State channels. Thus, in addition to prioritising a more gender-aware set of ‘primary’ needs around which to organise development interventions, these NGOs have sought to respond to a ‘secondary’ set of needs which arise from the specific constraints that women face in taking advantage of development opportunities. A number of examples will make this clear.

Women’s credit schemes

Returning to the question of credit, what has become abundantly clear is that formal financial institutions have failed to reach the poor, and particularly poor women. Even where such institutions have sought to implement special credit schemes for the poor — such as the Uganda Commercial Bank’s Rural Farmers’ Scheme and the Differential Rate of Interest Scheme in India, both implemented through
mainstream banking institutions — women’s participation has been poor. Research into these efforts has helped to identify the mismatch between the norms and procedures of banking and women’s needs and constraints. These constraints are:

- Lack of collateral to underwrite loans.
- Inflexible procedures, formidable paperwork, and literacy requirements. The study of the Uganda Bank scheme found that the number of visits required to get loans applications processed and money released was a major reason given by women farmers for not participating in the scheme.
- The small scope of most women’s enterprises, which means that they are considered less credit-worthy.
- The costs of transactions, such as the expense incurred in acquiring information about a group that is generally more isolated and less mobile, and the relatively high costs of administering small loans.
- The social distance between bank employees, mainly middle-class men, and poor women.
- Ambiguous goals for employees in commercially-run banking organisations, who are required to pursue conventional profit-oriented aims in the administration of most of the Bank’s loans, but to adopt a different attitude when dealing with the Bank’s poverty-alleviation projects. This is clearly a problem, when there are no internal incentives to reward achievements in lending to the poor.

Gender-sensitive responses to women’s credit needs have taken a number of different forms. Some, like Mahila Milan, the Federation of Women’s Collectives in Bombay (Patel and D’Cruz, 1993), operate their own crisis credit scheme, funded by the savings of low-income households. The Federation works closely with SPARC, which initially put aside an equivalent amount of capital to compensate for any losses. While the actual money raised is modest, it does satisfy urgent needs for cash among members. Others, like the Working Women’s Forum in Madras, India, have acted as financial intermediaries between women in the urban informal sector and the mainstream banking system. Still others, like Grameen and SEWA, operate as poverty-focused banks. What these initiatives have in common is that they have tried to overcome some of the gender-determined constraints that women, particularly poorer women, face in getting access to credit, by putting in place a number of innovative institutional practices. These include:

- Compensating for the absence of material collateral through other mechanisms. For example, the Uganda Bank adopted character-based lending. In the case of Grameen, reliance was on ‘social collateral’: the principle of groups of borrowers with joint liability for each other’s debts. Each member knows that, unless loans are repaid, the chances of other group members receiving loans in the future are jeopardised.
- Guaranteeing physical access, as for example by Grameen’s strategy of ‘barefoot banking’, through a dense network of branches and outreach by bank staff.
- Simplified procedures and minimal form filling. Grameen’s borrowers undergo a training workshop to learn to sign their names. SEWA’s members carry identity cards with their photographs. Mahila Milan overcomes the problems posed by the illiteracy of its members by oral and memory processes and the use of symbols. Women keep track of their accounts in plastic bags with different-coloured squares of paper, representing sums of different denominations.
- Interest is generally set at commercial rates; the emphasis is on subsidising access rather than interest rates.
A women's health and vocational training scheme

A similar attempt to meet the needs of the poor, with a special emphasis on the needs of poor women, is to be found in Gono-shasthya Kendra (GSK, 1991), also in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, as in much of the Third World, poor people cannot easily take advantage of official health services. This is due to the urban bias of such service-provision, its cost in terms of money and time, and a social distance between (generally male) professional providers and poor rural women. In the Bangladeshi context, it is compounded by cultural norms which dictate female seclusion and restrict women’s physical mobility.

GSK seeks to service the community through a network of female paramedics, who have been given training in preventative and basic curative care. It relies on young women who have completed a minimum level of schooling, rather than asking for the formal qualifications necessary in conventional nursing. Through a system of monthly household visits, using bicycles to cover distances, GSK overcomes the problems of physical and social constraints on women’s access to health care. While it runs a health-insurance scheme to recover some of its costs, contributions are fixed on a sliding scale to reflect household income. However, since the case of an attempted suicide by a young woman in the early years of its life, GSK has also attempted to improve the quality of women’s lives, as well their health. It runs vocational training schemes for women, focusing on non-traditional skills (carpentry, metal work, fibre-glass fabrication, shoe-making, and the operation, repair, and management of irrigation-pumps). Such skills are not only likely to bring higher financial returns, but also help to challenge prevailing stereotypes about women’s competencies and skills.

Providing resources is not enough

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss in detail the full range of examples of institutional innovations undertaken by NGOs. However, this brief discussion suggests a key lesson for the design of gender-aware interventions for poverty-reduction. All institutions are made up of rules and norms, practices and procedures which determine which categories of people are likely to be included in — and excluded from — its various operations. Many of these norms and practices were developed at a time when the issue of equity for women and men was not on the agenda, and they now need to be re-thought. More recent analysis reveals that interventions are likely to by-pass women, unless they are designed to address the more complex set of constraints that differentiate women’s access to resources and opportunities from men’s: mere provision is not enough. Beyond basic needs, generally regarded as the main entry-point for poverty-oriented intervention, there is a further set of ‘needs’ (often less visible), stemming from gender-specific constraints which differentiate men’s and women’s terms of access to service provision. Unless institutions are organised to accommodate these secondary needs, they are unlikely to achieve equity for women and men in their outcomes. If the existing mainstream institutions cannot be transformed overnight to take account of the logic of women’s lives, gender-aware poverty-reduction requires institutional mechanisms that can help to bridge this gap.

Participation and strategic gender Interests

The emphasis so far has been on the participatory identification and design of projects that addressed perceived gender-specific needs, opportunities, and constraints. However, if poverty-reduction is to be combined with fair treatment for women,
we must address the underlying structural conditions which generate and sustain inequality and inequity. A study of the different strategies used by the more innovative NGOs provides insights into how the question of women’s empowerment is conceptualised at the grassroots level. Most of the NGOs we have been discussing use women’s basic needs as an entry point for their work within the community, rather than tackling structural inequalities head-on. The transformative potential of their efforts lies in how they attempt to meet these needs: the extent to which they result in building up the self-organisation and self-confidence of poor women sufficiently for them to participate further upstream in the policy-making process. The need for ‘upstream’ participation is essential, since this is where key decisions about the economy are taken and priorities for resource allocation are determined. Until this occurs, poor women will remain at the receiving end of development, however much they participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects. Thus a more accountable development requires that women are actors in the making of decisions at the policy level. The empowerment of women clearly entails a more political agenda, in that it challenges the existing status quo within the community, and here we can identify a number of elements in NGO strategies which appear to have this transformative potential.

First of all, there is a stress on the provision of new economic resources, rather than resources which merely reinforce women’s traditional roles within a given society. Such provision sends out an important signal about the productive potential of poor women, against the general tendency to regard the existing division of resources as culturally immutable. It suggests that poverty-reduction programmes could help to continue pushing back the boundaries of what is considered possible or permissible for women to do in a given society.

Secondly, there is an emphasis on building new forms of collective relationships. A considerable body of research has found that, where women are members of associations beyond the household, and where these associations are based on solidarity and mutual self-help, they are likely to exercise greater bargaining power within the household as well as to participate more actively in community life. This provides some of the rationale for the stress which many NGOs place on building new collective relationships among poor women, and between poor women and men. It is worth noting that, with this broader perspective, the issue of whether the process begins with the building of women-only groups or integrated groups becomes irrelevant. The question is to what extent these groups are seen as isolated from the rest of the community, and to what extent they are seen as part of building up the broader organisations of the poor.

However, unless such relationships are mobilised to develop organisational power, their transformative potential is unlikely to be fully realised. Consequently, a third common element is the emphasis on collective action around self-defined priorities. The evaluation literature about these NGOs points to a variety of actions, initiated by both women-only groups and by women in alliance with men. Actions range from protests against dowry customs, wife-beating, male alcoholism, and cheating by public works officials to challenging local power structures, or taking part in local elections and community action. Such collective action breaks down past isolation, and helps to link women and other hitherto marginalised groups to broader political currents of their societies. And this is critical. Unless women are empowered to move beyond the project-trap and to take part in the making of policy where the key decisions about resource allocations are taken, they will always be a residual category in development.
Notes

1 This is an expanded version of a paper prepared for the Conference on Social Development and Poverty, Oaxaca, Mexico, September 1993.

2 The focus on the politics of needs interpretation in this paper draws on ideas put forward in Fraser (1989).

References


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We want a world where inequality based on class, gender, and race is absent from every country, and from the relationships among countries. We want a world where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity, and women's values of nurturance and solidarity will characterize human relationships. In such a world women's reproductive role will be redefined: child care will be shared by men, women, and society as a whole. We want a world where the massive resources now used in the production of the means of destruction will be diverted to areas where they will help to relieve oppression both inside and outside the home.... We want a world where all institutions are open to participatory democratic processes, where women share in determining priorities and decisions.... Only by sharpening the links between equality, development, and peace, can we show that the 'basic rights' of the poor and the transformation of the institutions that subordinate women are inextricably linked. They can be achieved together through the self-empowerment of women.


It was nearly two decades ago that the global community affirmed gender equality as a central developmental concern, and a decade ago that it adopted Forward Looking Strategies (FLS) to accelerate women's advancement. In the last twenty years, in response to the demands of the women's movement and the United Nations mandates, national governments and international development agencies have adopted special policies and measures to promote women's advancement. 'Women in development' (WID) emerged as a visible field of policy and action in most of the international development agencies and in many countries, especially those which were dependent on foreign assistance. The United Nations organized three world conferences on women — in Mexico in 1975, in Copenhagen in 1980, and in Nairobi in 1985 — and is poised for the fourth in Beijing in 1995. It is time to ask: what have been the achievements so far? How have the various policies and measures adopted by the international agencies and national governments functioned? Have they been effective in promoting women's advancement and gender equality? Have the world's women
witnessed significant improvements in their living and working conditions over the last twenty years?

Evidence suggests a mixed record. On the one hand, sustained advocacy has led to greater understanding and awareness of gender issues. Women's organizations and networks have multiplied. The women's movement has gained in strength. Women's agendas have been more clearly articulated – equality, empowerment and the transformation of existing development paradigms have emerged as critical issues. Governments and international agencies have adopted more mandates and policies and implemented a variety of actions. Protest movements and grassroots initiatives have shown alternative paths to development. On the other hand, data also indicate that inequalities have grown between the North and the South; between the rich and the poor. In the last two decades, more women have joined the ranks of the world's poor in both North and South. The cutbacks in social services as a result of structural adjustment policies, and the increased incidence of crime and violence, have hit poor women the hardest. Women's responsibilities as sole or primary income-earners have increased, their labour-force participation rates have grown, but the workplace has not made significant changes to accommodate women's needs, and continues to exploit women as cheap labour. Economic desperation has led to unprecedented female migration and an increased trafficking of women and children worldwide.

The most recent *Global Survey of the Role of Women in Development* summed up the impact of the 1980s on the world's women as follows:

If the global economic situation in the 1980s is examined in aggregate terms, it has been one of the longest periods of growth ever recorded; but ... development, as it has been understood in its broadest sense in international development strategies, has not been occurring. This is particularly true for women. The evidence shows that while some have improved their position through improved access to employment and more remunerated economic sectors, far more have become poor. Ironically poverty among women has increased even within the richest countries resulting in what has become known as the 'feminization of poverty'.

If the 1980s have not been favourable to the majority of the world's women, what are their prospects for the 1990s? Again, there are contradictory trends. Women are faced with challenges of ever greater hardship, but they are also presented with increased opportunities to bring their perspective to bear in shaping the future development agenda. The emphasis on market-oriented policies, the opening up of markets by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and heightened competition between countries for market share are likely to result
in an intensification of the current policies and practices of exploiting women’s unpaid and low-paid labour and using them as a reserve labour-force. The rekindling of old ethnic rivalries, war and fundamentalism raises the prospects of greater violence against women and more outside control over their bodies and choices. On the other hand, the growing strength of civil society and the movements for democracy, human rights, people’s participation and the environment are likely to create a bigger space for women’s voices in determining the direction of development. How can the global community guard against the negative trends and foster the positive? What strategies should be followed in the 1990s?

In charting future directions, we need to review our past experiences and draw lessons from what has worked and what has not. This study is an attempt to assess the experiences of one set of actors – the international donor agencies – who have played a critical role in shaping both the global development agenda and the specific WID policies and measures. It seeks to elucidate how WID policies and measures have worked in different settings – in donor agencies as well as in their partner countries. The study investigates whether these policies and measures have been successful in achieving their aims and in meeting the aspirations of the women’s movement. It is not intended to be a detailed evaluation; the experiences of both the donors and their counterparts are analysed to illuminate the key issue explored by the study: why has progress been so elusive for women? What explains the contradictory trends – a heightened advocacy and awareness of gender issues on the one hand, and the growing poverty of the world’s women on the other?

To aid our understanding of these achievements and failures, the study examines several questions: How should progress be measured – by WID efforts or results? What explains the gaps between the intentions and the impact of WID policies and measures? Is progress elusive because women’s agendas have not been clearly defined, or is it because policies and measures have not adequately addressed that agenda? Are WID policies and strategies essentially on the right track, needing only more time and better implementation, or do they need reorientation?

WOMEN’S AGENDA

When the United Nations declared 1976–85 the Decade for Women and Development it created high expectations, particularly among women in the South. It was hoped that the international development agencies and national governments would provide leadership in giving guidance and undertaking proactive measures to address the root causes of gender
inequalities. Since civil society was relatively weak in the Southern countries, the fledgling women's groups that were interested in development issues in the 1970s made the state and the international development agencies a prime target of their advocacy efforts. The international agencies and national governments slowly responded. Typically they set up what has come to be known as 'special machineries' for women—women's ministries or bureaux in national governments, and WID advisors or units in international agencies. These machineries devised policies and strategies, and implemented actions. They supported research and special projects, developed guidelines, organized training, introduced special procedures and tools, and funded women's organizations. These multifaceted activities enhanced knowledge and understanding of gender issues, increased gender expertise within agencies and governments, and strengthened the voice of women. But it became increasingly evident that the international agencies and their development partners were bypassing a large part of the women's agenda.

The choice of the three major themes of the Decade for Women—equality, development and peace—already signalled a comprehensive agenda. The Plan of Action debated in Mexico in 1975 and the Forward Looking Strategies adopted in Nairobi in 1985 included a wide list of issues encompassing the total spectrum of development. While the breadth of issues sometimes made the women's agenda look diffuse, several issues have emerged over the years as women's core concerns (see Figure 1.1).

*Rights* Though the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations nearly fifty years ago, recognized women's rights as an integral part of human rights, in many countries women still do not enjoy equal legal rights. Guaranteeing women equal rights under the law, enforcing these, and raising women's consciousness about their rights became major issues on the women's agenda. The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (UNCEDAW) was a major step forward in setting international standards of gender equality. However, about a quarter of the world's states are still to ratify CEDAW, and some have ratified it with reservations. Monitoring the ratifications and implementation of CEDAW remains a major challenge for the future.

*Entitlement* Early in the Decade for Women, data from around the world indicated that gender inequalities in access to and control over productive resources—land, capital, information, training, technology, the market, and so on—disadvantaged women in the labour market; that when endowed and equipped with productive resources women
Figure 1.1 Women’s Agenda

1. Rights
   • Legal equality
   • Enforcement
   • Awareness-raising

2. Entitlement
   • Access to and control over productive resources and services

3. Investment
   • Elimination of the gender gaps in human development
   • Support for gender needs

4. Voice
   • Decisionmaking
   • Women’s visions of alternative development agenda

5. Poverty
   • Policy/programme interventions
   • Female-headed households

6. Reproductive Labour
   • Male sharing of responsibilities
   • Public/private sector provisioning of services

7. Security
   • Domestic violence and abuse
   • Violence and harassment in the public domain

8. Empowerment
   • Assertion of own agency

could increase their productivity and ensure greater returns on their labour. Institutional and legal reforms to guarantee women equal rights to inherit and own property, obtain credit and become members of producers’ organizations have been a longstanding item on the women’s agenda.
Investment  Investing in women is yet another consistent demand. It has been repeatedly argued that gender inequalities in human development — that is, in education, health and nutrition — have limited women's well-being as well as their income-earning capacity; that public- and private-sector investment is called for to close the gender gap in human development. Resources are needed not only to improve girls' and women's access to education, training, healthcare and nutrition; they are also required to support a wide range of hitherto-neglected concerns that deserve priority attention — such as women's health, science and technical training for women, gender stereotyping of curricula, and so on.

Voice  Ensuring the presence of women's voices in decisionmaking has been another persistent concern, as their absence results in a continued marginalization of gender issues in public discourse. Women need to participate not simply as passive beneficiaries: their involvement as decisionmakers is central to the direction of development. Women's organizations and movements have helped to strengthen the voice of women in articulating not merely narrow WID concerns but also their vision of a total development agenda.

Poverty  The growing burden of poverty on women has been a long-standing concern of the women's movement. Early in the Decade, data from around the world indicated that women were shouldering a disproportionate burden of poverty, in part because of gender inequalities in entitlement, investment and power. The plight of female-headed households, often the poorest of the poor, emerged as a global phenomenon. Feminists from the South especially have highlighted poverty as a priority issue, calling for policy/programme interventions to eliminate poverty and address the special needs of female-headed households.

Reproductive labour  From the beginning of the Decade for Women it became apparent that the gender division of labour prevailing in most societies has resulted in a greater responsibility on the part of women for unpaid reproductive work (such as care of children, the sick and the elderly; household maintenance; provision of basic needs), and this has limited their participation in paid productive work, and paid and unpaid community and public service. Women's movements have demanded that men assume greater responsibility for childcare and household maintenance, and pressed for stronger social policies to ensure changes in laws and the provisioning of public- and private-sector services which
would relieve women's reproductive burden. It was argued that without such support women would increase their productive roles only at the cost of their health and leisure.

Security Security from war and violence has been yet another major concern of the women's movement. Violence is used as an instrument of oppression against women, limiting their rights and choices and creating obstacles to equal participation. Security emerged as a key issue on the women's agenda, particularly in the post-Nairobi decade. During this period women mobilized to demand security within the household as well as outside it: security from domestic violence and abuse; from assault, rape and sexual harassment in schools, the workplace and streets; and from war-related violence that results in mass rapes and dislocation of populations.

Empowerment Though organization and consciousness-raising have been on the women's agenda all along, self-empowerment gained salience as a critical strategy only in the last decade. Over the years, there has been gradual recognition that mere access to resources or provisioning of services is not adequate to challenge the root causes of gender inequality; that women need to assert their own agency, and only through self-empowerment can they aspire to break out of gender subordination.

In the last two decades, the women's movement has succeeded in creating common ground among women worldwide around the above set of core concerns. Common ground was created not through a monolithic feminist vision but through a process of exchange and negotiation among women's groups from North and South. At the first World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975, where many of the feminists from North and South met for the first time, there were heated debates and sharp division of opinion — equality appeared to be the priority of the First World; peace of the Second; and development of the Third World. By the time the Nairobi World Conference on Women was held in 1985, the interlinkages and indivisibility of the three themes — equality, development and peace — became clear to the feminists of North and South. The many exchanges between North and South held during the Decade facilitated consensus-building. These dialogues recognized the differences in interests and priorities between North and South, but at the same time they sought to build North–South alliances around common goals. Gender equality and social transformation emerged as two common objectives shared by many feminists from both North and South.
From the beginning of the Decade for Women, feminists from the South consistently articulated three major concerns. First, they underscored the need to link gender-, class- and race-based inequalities and discrimination, and argued that struggles against gender inequality must be accompanied by struggles against other forms of inequality and discrimination. Second, Southern feminists pointed out that to explain gender inequality, it was necessary to look at social structures, development paradigms and macro-policies rather than simply addressing social norms and cultures and WID-focused policies. They emphasized that an improvement in women’s lives and opportunities is only possible through structural changes and changes in the macro-policy environment. Third, Southern feminists demanded not simply gender parity or gender balance in representation, but a total transformation of the development agenda from a gender perspective, elaborating a feminist vision of alternative development.

The holistic view of development envisioned by the Southern feminists has been reiterated in many major conferences and publications throughout the last twenty years. For example, in a regional South and Southeast Asian Conference held in Bangladesh in 1977, the participants demanded gender equality in ‘the opportunities of development and in the decisionmaking processes’ as well as women’s involvement ‘in all spheres of life in the processes of social and economic transformation’. They declared that ‘no amount of special programmes will succeed in integrating half the population of the country’. In 1979 a position paper on feminist ideology published by the Asia Pacific Centre for Women and Development (APCWD) asserted that ‘oppression of women is rooted in both inequalities and discrimination based on sex and in poverty and the injustice of the political and economic systems based on race and class’. In 1982, the Dakar Declaration on Another Development with Women, drawn up by a group of African women, stated that:

the most fundamental and underlying principle of Another Development should be that of structural transformation, a notion which challenges the economic, political and cultural forms of domination ... which are found at the international, national and household levels. Accordingly, at the international levels, Another Development should replace the forms of dependent development and unequal terms of exchange with that of mutually beneficial and negotiated interdependence.... Nationally, models of development have to be based on the principle of self reliance ... and the building of genuinely democratic institutions and practices.... At the local and household levels, the vision of Another Development ought to reject existing structures that create or reinforce a sexual division of labour.
In 1981, putting forward a Third World women's perspective of development, DAWN — a network of Southern feminists — argued that:

both poverty and gender subordination must be transformed by our vision ... in a world and in countries riven with differences of economic interest and political power, we cannot expect political will for systemic change to emerge voluntarily.... It must be fostered by mass movements that give central focus to the 'basic rights' of the poor and demand reorientation of policies, programmes and projects toward that end.... The transformation of the structures of subordination that have been so inimical to women is the other part of our vision.... Changes in laws, civil codes, systems of property rights, control over our bodies, labour codes and the social and legal institutions that underwrite male control and privilege are essential if women are to attain justice in society.  

What were the responses of the international donor agencies to the demands of the women's movement, especially the concerns articulated by the Southern feminists? Did the donors come forward with a systematic response? Did they address the issues raised by the Southern feminists?

THE DONORS' RESPONSE

The donors responded gradually and slowly. The issues brought forward by the women's movement were novel, and they were also critical of donors' past policies. The criticisms came from several different angles. Some, especially many of the earlier feminists from the North, reproached the donors for past neglect and argued that what women needed was more 'integration' — greater visibility, more participation, additional resources, and so on. Others, however, especially feminists from the South, argued that it was not the lack of integration but the exploitation and unequal conditions under which women were being integrated in the production process that had caused gender inequalities; that their greater integration in the prevailing development strategies would only exacerbate the inequalities. What women needed was not integration but a fundamental reorientation of existing development paradigms.

The donors were initially responsive to the integrationist perspective. Instead of changing policy, programme and investment priorities, they took an 'add-on' integrationist approach — adding a few specific measures, and WID staff and projects. The institutionalization of WID, rather than its operationalization, became a priority concern. Donors spent the greater part of the Decade for Women advocating the adoption of WID mandates, policies and measures. In 1983, the Development
Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adopted a set of WID Guiding Principles, which for the first time attempted to systematize and coordinate the response of bilateral donors. The DAC/WID Guiding Principles, which were later revised in 1989 in the light of the 1985 Forward Looking Strategies, endorsed ‘integration’ as the objective and urged DAC member donor organizations to adopt a series of measures grouped under four categories: (a) mandates, policy guidelines, and plans of action; (b) administrative measures; (c) implementation; and (d) coordination, consultation, and development education. The Guiding Principles, which were regularly monitored by the DAC Expert Group on WID, not only facilitated institutionalization of WID in bilateral donors agencies, they also influenced their institutionalization in multilateral agencies.\textsuperscript{11}

The post-Nairobi decade witnessed a significant increase in donors’ commitment to and resourcing of WID. Most agencies adopted WID policies and measures, and introduced various procedures to ensure agency compliance with WID mandates. Staffing and budgetary resources for WID were increased. Donors also started paying greater attention to operational issues, designing operational guidelines and tools and beginning to use macroeconomic policy frameworks and policy dialogues to address gender issues. Some of the initial approaches also came under review. For example, several agencies substituted other goals for the objective of ‘integration’ — for example, ‘mainstreaming’, or ‘women’s autonomy’. Similarly, many agencies changed the nomenclature of their programmes from ‘Women in Development’ (WID) to ‘Gender and Development’ (GAD), arguing that while WID focused primarily on women, a gender approach, by focusing on the socially constructed roles of both women and men, looks at women in the context of society and was better suited to cross-sectoral analysis.\textsuperscript{12}

This greater attention and the increased resources resulted in a significant growth of WID/GAD-related activities both in donor agencies and in their partner countries, especially in the first few years after Nairobi. But by the early 1990s there were clear signs that the donors were losing their post-Nairobi euphoria. Several agencies reorganized their WID offices and cut back resources. Many within agencies started to talk about ‘WID fatigue’\textsuperscript{13}, some donor assessments found WID losing ‘momentum’\textsuperscript{14}, while still others pointed out that WID efforts were falling short of donors’ lofty goals.\textsuperscript{15} Donors began to talk about ‘WID results’ and ‘measurable progress’.

What might explain this rapid rise of WID fatigue within the relatively short time span of half a decade? If donors and their development partners were able to stay with other issues such as population and
Figure 1.2 Analytical Framework for Assessment of WID/GAD Policies and Measures

1. Objective
   (A) Substantive
   • Women’s advancement
   • Gender equality
   • Women’s empowerment
   (B) Instrumental
   • Integration
   • Mainstreaming

2. Approach
   • Integrationist
   • Agenda-setting

3. Strategies
   (A) Institutional
   • Responsibility
   • Accountability
   • Coordination
   • Monitoring
   • Evaluation
   • Personnel policy
   (B) Operational
   • Guidelines
   • Training
   • Research
   • Special projects
   • Analytical tools
   • Country programming
   • Macro-policies
   • Policy dialogues

4. Measures of Progress
   (A) Mainstreaming
   • Resources
   • Discourse
   (B) Gender Equality
   • Law and norms
   • Human development
   (C) Empowerment
   • Women’s movement
   • Public action
   • Decisionmaking
poverty alleviation for several decades with incremental results, why did they start becoming impatient with WID results? Is WID being judged differently from other issues? Or is there still no clear indicator to assess its performance and progress? Are donor agencies shifting attention to more fashionable issues? Or are donors simply tired, faced with too many mandates and too many countries, and coming to realize their role in influencing the process of development is limited? There are many unexplored issues that a systematic assessment of WID needs to address.

THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study has a relatively narrow focus: it looks at the experiences of four donor agencies and two of their partner countries over the last two decades and asks three basic sets of questions. First, what were the articulated objectives of their WID policies and measures? Were they responsive to the aspirations of the women’s movement, particularly concerns raised by the feminists from the South? Was there a congruence between the objectives of the donors and those of their development partners? Second, did the donors and their partners adopt any identifiable set of strategies to realize the policy objectives? Were they effective? What were their implementation experiences? Finally, what were the results? Did the donors and their partners establish any indicator to assess achievement of goals? Was there any quantitative and qualitative evidence to suggest progress? What should be the measures of progress?

I use a relatively simple analytical framework to conceptualize and compare the policy objectives, strategies, and measures of progress (see Figure 1.2). To compare policy objectives I differentiate between substantive and process-focused instrumental objectives. In their various policy statements and documents donors have referred to substantive objectives such as women’s advancement, gender equality, women’s empowerment and so on. They have also committed themselves to process-focused instrumental objectives such as women’s ‘integration’ and ‘mainstreaming’. Generally, donors have highlighted process-focused instrumental objectives. Early on in the Decade, donors chose ‘integration’ as the objective of their policies. Agency documents referred to women’s ‘integration as agents and beneficiaries of development’ or as ‘full partners of men’. But, as noted earlier, many feminists, especially those from the South, rejected the goal of integration. They argued that women did not want to be integrated in an unequal and exploitative system – they wanted to change the prevailing system.

Dissatisfaction with the concept of integration led many development agencies and their partner countries to shift to a new term – ‘main-
streaming' women in development. Mainstreaming was chosen as a goal because it was felt that during the Decade for Women, special WID ghettos were being created in the name of integration. But again, like the earlier objective of integration, mainstreaming was a catch-all term, and donors did not explain the reasons for their shift from integration to mainstreaming.

Mainstreaming: integrationist and agenda-setting

What does mainstreaming mean? How is it different from the earlier goal of integration? English-language dictionaries variously define 'mainstream' as 'the prevailing current, direction of activity/influence' or 'the principal, dominant course, tendency or trend'. Mainstreaming as a concept obviously reflects a desire for women to be at centre-stage, part of the mainstream. But how would women become part of the mainstream? In a paper commissioned by the OECD/DAC's Expert Group on WID to elaborate the concept of mainstreaming, I identified two broad approaches. The first, 'integrationist', approach builds gender issues within existing development paradigms. Widening women-and-gender concerns across a broad spectrum of sectors is the key strategy within this concept: the overall development agenda is not transformed, but each issue is adapted to take into account women-and-gender concerns. A good example of the 'integrationist' approach is the practice of designing WID 'components' in major sectoral programmes and projects. Women are 'fitted' into as many sectors and programmes as possible, but sector and programme priorities do not change because of gender considerations.

The second approach, which I call 'agenda-setting', implies the transformation of the existing development agenda with a gender perspective. The participation of women as decisionmakers in determining development priorities is the key strategy here: women participate in all development decisions, and through this process bring about a fundamental change in the existing development paradigm. Women not only become a part of the mainstream, they also reorient the nature of the mainstream. It is not simply women as individuals but women's 'agenda' which gets recognition from the mainstream. An example of an agenda-setting approach is the prioritizing of women's empowerment in population sector programmes.

WID strategies: institutional and operational

In comparing WID strategies, two broad categories are again used: institutional and operational. Institutional strategies are the input-side
interventions which aim primarily at structural changes within agencies and governments to facilitate the implementation of WID policies and measures. Instruments and procedures relating to WID/GAD responsibility, accountability, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and personnel policy fall under the category of institutional strategies. Operational strategies, on the other hand, are the output-oriented measures designed to bring about a change in the work programmes of agencies and governments. Guidelines, training, research, special projects, analytical tools, country programming, macro-policies and policy dialogue are some of the operational strategies promoted so far.

Measuring progress

To assess progress towards goal achievement broad indicators are used. Since a great deal of donor agency effort was spent in achieving the goals of integration and/or mainstreaming, two rough indicators are constructed to gauge progress in mainstreaming. The first, mainstreaming resources, uses quantitative data, available in donor agencies and their counterpart governments, about women's representation on the staff and women-oriented assistance. It essentially measures agency and government input. The second indicator is primarily based on qualitative information. Key agency and government documents are analysed to assess achievements over time in mainstreaming gender issues in development discourse. It is oriented towards agencies' and the governments' output. To assess progress in achieving the two major goals of the women's movement – gender equality and women's empowerment – again rough indicators are constructed. Available data on human development and legal and institutional reforms from the two partner countries are used to underscore the kinds of progress that aid-recipient women have made in achieving gender equality. And both quantitative and qualitative data from the two partner countries are used to indicate whether women are being empowered. Since empowerment is a rather nebulous concept I use three main criteria – strengthening of the women's movement; participation in public action; and involvement in national and local decisionmaking bodies – to assess progress in empowerment.

Donors and their development partners

This study reviews and compares the experiences of four donors – the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD); the United Nations
INTRODUCTION

Development Programme (UNDP); and the World Bank (WB) — and two development partner countries: Tanzania and Bangladesh.

The two bilateral donors — CIDA and NORAD — were selected because among donors they have a reputation of mounting major WID efforts. They number among the few agencies who had adopted detailed WID policies and plans before the end of the Decade. They also undertook their own internal assessments. In contrast, the two multilateral donors — UNDP and the World Bank — were chosen not on the strength of their WID mandates and policies, but because of the influence they wield in shaping the development strategies of the countries of the South. The World Bank through its conditionalities often dictates policy reforms to aid-recipient governments. The UNDP, as the largest fund, has a big presence within the United Nations system. The actions of these two agencies — what they advocate and what they omit or marginalize — have a strong impact on the policy analysis and investment decision of the aid-recipient countries.

The major consideration in selecting the two countries, Tanzania and Bangladesh, is the presence in them of a large number of donors, which make them an interesting case study of donor influence and the results of WID policies in two different continents. My own familiarity with these two countries (especially with my own country, Bangladesh) is another consideration that weighed heavily in the selection of the countries.

Although in making a comparison between the agencies and the countries I have drawn a number of conclusions about their commonalities and differences, it should be made clear that the agencies and the countries do not constitute a representative sample. For example, of the twenty-two DAC member donor organizations, the two reviewed by this study — CIDA and NORAD — are among those which have mounted the most WID efforts: many bilateral donors have only just started to take WID/GAD initiatives.19

DATA

This study is primarily based on published and unpublished data collected from the four donor agencies and the two national governments during 1991–92. Staff of donor agencies were interviewed both in the headquarters and in the field offices of Tanzania and Bangladesh. Government officials as well as women and men outside the government were interviewed in the two countries.

A great deal of data is available from agency and government sources about the extent to which they have adopted WID measures, but information about the impact of these measures on operations and on people
on the ground is rather more limited. Operational and impact data are less systematic and precise. Until now, donors and governments have primarily monitored their WID activities, but not their results. A few agencies have attempted to evaluate their WID efforts; but of the four donors studied here, only CIDA has undertaken any systematic assessment of its WID policies. Recently many agencies have started to evaluate their WID efforts as part of their preparation for the fourth World Conference on Women (WCW) in Beijing. OECD/DAC has completed a major assessment of DAC donors' WID efforts.

The donors' assessment of effectiveness has been based mainly on the perceptions of their own staff; the views of the women who are the recipients of aid, on the receiving end of policies, were rarely solicited. However, the perceptions of agency staff varied a great deal, and I was particularly struck by the sharp contrast between the views expressed by the WID staff and those of the other agency staff. While the former were often critical of their agencies, the latter appeared to be generally complimentary about agency efforts and achievements.

The contrasting perspectives of the various people involved and the uneven quality of data make the assessment of WID measures difficult. Donors and governments have yet to collate and systematize the diverse information they have generated in the field. Researchers and activists outside the agencies generally do not have access to agency data and documents, and this has resulted in an information gap. By synthesizing information available from the various donor agencies and governments, this study attempts to fill the gap, and initiate a debate about past efforts and achievements as well as future challenges.

**Organization of this study**

This book is divided into seven chapters. Following on from this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 looks at policy objectives and advocates. Based on a comparative review of the policy statements of donors and their development partners, it attempts to analyse and compare policy objectives, and to highlight common patterns and approaches. It investigates whether policies have attempted to address the agenda of the women themselves, especially the concerns of the Southern feminists. The chapter also briefly describes the policy advocates: the main players who influenced the adoption of the policies in different agencies and countries.

Chapters 3 and 4 describe the WID/GAD strategies adopted by the donors and their development partners. Chapter 3 focuses on institutional strategies, whereas Chapter 4 goes on to discuss operational
strategies. Published and unpublished data and personal interviews are used to describe the implementation of strategies and to assess their efficacy, making a comparison between the efforts of the various donors and counterparts.

Chapter 5 attempts to assess results. Based on the available quantitative and qualitative data, it constructs several indicators to measure progress in achieving three major goals – mainstreaming, gender equality and women's empowerment. To a limited extent the donor agencies are already monitoring their mainstreaming efforts to increase women's share of agency staff and budget, and have also deliberately attempted to mainstream discussion of gender issues in agency documents. In contrast, the donor agencies have not made much effort systematically to monitor the achievements in gender equality and women's empowerment. The indicators used in this study to assess progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment suggest the kinds of tools donors and governments might use to assess the results of their WID measures. Chapter 6 summarizes the major findings of the study, highlighting both achievements and shortfalls, and identifying priority areas of action for the future. The final chapter pulls together the major conclusions of the study.

Throughout the study I generally use the term 'development partner', rather than 'aid recipient', to underscore the perspective we need to use in future. References to 'donors' and 'development partners' generally imply the four donors and two partners reviewed in the book. The terms WID/GAD are used to indicate changes in the nomenclature of the programmes.

NOTES

4. Rounaq Jahan and Hanna Papanek, eds., Women and Development: Perspectives from South and South East Asia, Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs, Dhaka 1979, p. 11.
5. Ibid., p. 12.


20. CIDA, Gender as a Cross Cutting Theme in Development Assistance.

Women in development: a critical analysis

GINA KOCZBERSKI

ABSTRACT In the early 1970s a general disenchantment with development efforts in Third World countries led to a search for alternative development strategies and a growing awareness that women, like the poor, were peripheral to the development efforts of major aid donors. In 1972 the United Nations designated 1975 as International Women’s Year, highlighting the need to involve women in issues of economic development. During the past 20 years the ‘women in development’ approach, which seeks to recognise and integrate women in aid policies and programmes, has been incorporated into the aid practice of most development agencies. This paper traces the efforts of large aid agencies over the past two decades to integrate women into their aid programmes and discusses the main limitations and weaknesses of the WID approach.

Many studies of Third World women in the 1990s indicate that their impoverishment is growing, their work burdens expanding and their status relative to men declining. Given the optimism of development agencies in the 1970s that a focus on women in their aid programmes would automatically improve their lives, it is pertinent to ask why so little has been achieved. It is recognised that such a question encompasses a broad and complex set of factors that cannot be addressed adequately in a single piece of work. This paper, therefore, narrows the search for possible explanations by examining some of the major aid agencies’ efforts to incorporate women into their aid programmes over the past 20 years. These efforts to integrate women into their development plans are generally known as part of the ‘women in development’ (WID) approach.

The paper begins with a brief overview of the emergence of WID in the 1970s and then considers some of the main problems with this approach. It is argued that WID’s attempt to integrate women is based on certain assumptions and arguments that have limited its scope and success. Third World women have been presented in a particular way, with their problems and needs identified by WID ‘experts’, and their control over the development process firmly restricted. While WID may offer a different approach to ‘doing’ and ‘viewing’ development, it is not an alternative approach to mainstream development, as its concepts, strategies and perspectives on development remain welded to the existing Western-dominated development framework.

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The emergence of WID

The idea of integrating Third World women into aid practice first emerged in the USA in the early 1970s when (mainly female) development practitioners and researchers began pushing for greater representation of women in aid agencies, and demanding that more effort be made by aid organisations to recognise Third World women in their aid programmes. They argued that the aid programmes of the major institutions such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UN, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the World Bank were ‘male-biased’, resulting in women being ignored and/or disadvantaged by the development process. To support their argument, advocates pointed to the accumulating evidence that Third World women were not only ignored in development plans, but that their economic situation had barely improved over the years. Their pressure on US policy makers resulted in the 1973 Percy Amendment to the US Foreign Assistance Act, which required that USAID’s aid programmes ‘give particular attention to those programmes, projects and activities which tend to integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries’.

Thus, ‘integration’ meant women would be incorporated into existing development practice under orthodox notions of development. ‘Integration’ became the catch-cry of aid agencies in the 1970s and early 1980s, fuelled, to some extent, by the axiomatic assumption that women’s lives would improve once they had been integrated into the development process. While approaches such as ‘gender and development’ (GAD) and ‘women and the environment’ (WED) have crept into the discourse of aid agencies, and despite the fact that the concept of integration is now being challenged, integration still features strongly in the rhetoric of most aid agencies. For example, USAID and the World Bank continue to rely on the concepts and frameworks of WID, with its emphasis on integration, and the Australian government’s official overseas funding agency, AusAID, despite recently launching a GAD policy, still maintains that integration of women into its aid programmes is a long-term goal.

Since the mid-1970s there have been numerous initiatives undertaken by aid agencies to correct perceived male-bias in project planning and implementation to further integrate women into development practice. These include various WID policies and programmes, such as special WID units, WID advisors and, over the past decade, gender-analysis training of aid practitioners. For example, AusAID introduced gender analysis training, and gender-awareness raising sessions among staff are now part of staff training. By the early 1990s, AusAID was able to boast that most of its Country Program Managers and desk level officers had undergone gender training. Numerous consultants and WID ‘experts’ have been recruited, and various WID taskforces established to assist in specific programmes and to provide general staff support for the integration of women into the aid programme.

These integration efforts have increased recognition of women’s role in development and encouraged a more ‘gender-aware’ approach to development planning, but it is suggested that, by holding onto the early concept of integration, the resultant benefits have been limited. One reason for this is that the early concept of integration was (and still is) based largely on the tenet that
aid practice is male-biased. It is then assumed that, by overcoming male-bias in aid practice, women will automatically benefit more from development efforts. While it is recognised that aid practice was (and remains) male-biased, this paper argues that, by adopting this narrow approach to the problems experienced by women in developing countries, aid agencies and many WID advocates ignored the historical context of development. Also, they ignored some of the inherent problems with the framework of development itself, and failed to acknowledge the specific social and cultural contexts of women’s lives.

**Historical context of development**

A broader examination of the historical context of development would have revealed other fundamental issues relating to women and the development process. For example, much of the early dealings by developed countries with Third World countries were largely concerned with accessing the developing world’s resources and/or introducing the ‘primitives’ to Christianity. Only partial consideration was given to improving the material welfare of indigenous populations. These relationships with developing countries, often by colonising governments, were generally carried out under a mantle of moral superiority and, at times, condemnation of the indigenous population and their cultural and economic systems. As Mohanty explains:

> Institutionally, colonial rule operated by setting up visible, rigid, and hierarchical distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized. The physical and symbolic separation of the races was deemed necessary to maintain social distance and authority over subject peoples. In effect, the physical details (e.g., racial and sexual separation) of colonial settings were transmuted to a moral plan: the ideal imperial agent embodied authority, discipline, fidelity, devotion, fortitude, and self sacrifice. This definition of white men as ‘naturally’ born to rule is grounded in a discourse of race and sexuality which necessarily defined colonized peoples, men and women, as incapable of self-government. The maintenance of strong sexual and racial boundaries was thus essential to the distinctions which were made between ‘legitimate rulers’ and ‘childlike subjects’.

Associated with colonialism were fundamental long-term changes to indigenous social and political structures, land tenure, land-use and labour patterns, resulting in the profound disruption of whole societies. Although young men were the main target of colonial governments’ interventions (as a cheap labour force), the impacts were often more widespread, with men and women affected in different ways. Women, as the main food producers and nurturers, and in some areas the main generators of wealth, felt much of the brunt of colonialism. Land degradation, enforced relocation, commercialisation of agriculture, labour migration and weakened pre-colonial trading links all put tremendous pressures on women’s ability to meet their expected responsibilities. Colonialists (and missionaries) caused, *inter alia*, a re-definition of indigenous ideologies regarding identity, status, kinship, marriage, residential patterns and gender relations, all of which have had varying and unexpected consequences for women’s (and men’s) contemporary situations. These changes, which began in the colonial period,
continue to be felt by women today. For example, male outmigration from rural areas in many Third World countries was initiated during the colonial period, and has continued into the postcolonial period, adding to the work burdens of women. Thus it was not simply, or solely, a disregard for women by colonial administrators but a total disregard for indigenous economic and social systems, and a belief among many that the more ‘European’ indigenous societies became, the better would be the situation for women.

These features of colonialism, in particular the negative perceptions of non-Westerners, were reflected in the devaluing of indigenous social and political systems, and this view continued into the postcolonial period featuring strongly in the development model that emerged after World War II. For example, it was assumed that the development pattern of underdeveloped countries would mirror that of the developed nations of Western Europe and North America, so aid and development practice was geared to encouraging capital accumulation and overcoming barriers to development such as poor education and inappropriate ‘traditional’ practices and beliefs. It was believed that underdeveloped countries, plagued by traditional structures and values, would be transformed into modern Western-like industrial nations. This view of ‘natural’ progression was the basis of modernisation theory, which dominated development ideas between 1950 and 1970. As noted by Parpart and Marchand, ‘the rationale for this progression was provided by colonial (and later neo-colonial) discourses which compared “backward, primitive” Third World peoples and cultures unfavourably with the “progressive” North’. Modernisation theory thus adopted the dichotomisation of colonial discourse to reinforce developed nations’ superiority and the negative perceptions of Third World countries: modern/traditional, dynamic/static, progressive/backward and developed/underdeveloped.

Modernisation approaches also gave little consideration to the social and political impacts of economic growth or to the priorities of indigenous communities, the poor and women. An extensive body of literature now condemns the early modernisation approaches as having failed to deliver real benefits for Third World countries, especially the poor. Yet, ironically, it was the integration of women into this very framework of modernisation that WID advocates lobbied aid agencies to pursue. While not underestimating the effect of male-bias on women, a singular emphasis on male-bias by early WID proponents oversimplified the situation of Third World women by ignoring the economic, political and social manifestations of historical factors and processes. WID proponents also failed to see that male-bias and the invisibility of women were not separate from general Eurocentric development practice.

**Present WID integration efforts**

By disregarding factors other than male-bias that affect women’s lives and by ignoring the wider problems associated with mainstream development, a narrow approach to women based on ‘integration’ emerged in the 1970s. This concept of integration remains dominant in contemporary WID/GAD practice, and has served to limit the scope and success of WID/GAD practice by the major aid
organisations. I see three main interrelated problems. They are: i) the institutional construction of integration; ii) the categorisation and portrayal of Third World women; and iii) the privileging and power of integration efforts.

**Institutional construction of integration**

When the goal of integration first emerged in the 1970s, it was based on the view that through integration with national economies, Third World women would begin to participate in the development process. However, integration by development agencies assumed that women were not already participating in development, thereby concealing and devaluing women’s existing roles in informal economic and political activities and household production. Women’s work in subsistence production, informal markets and community and household work was therefore considered outside the domain of ‘development’, with the result that a large part of women’s work and daily life was neglected. As Sicoli rightfully remarked at a time when most donor agencies were proudly espousing the importance of integrating women into development: ‘the role of women in food and agricultural production is already so pervasive in most countries that exhortations to “integrate” women into rural development run the risk of sounding ridiculous’. By ignoring women’s work in informal economic and political spheres, not only was the concept of integrating women flawed from the outset, but it also suffered from the very problem WID practitioners were reportedly fighting against—that is, the invisibility of women’s multiple work roles.

Also, underpinning many of the integration efforts by development agencies was the belief that by increasing Third World women’s participation in formal economic and political structures, their status and position in the household and society generally would be enhanced. For example, AusAID documents repeatedly refer to improvements in women’s status gained through integration efforts. Similarly, USAID programmes and projects throughout most of the 1980s promoted activities to ‘integrate women into the economy of their respective countries, thereby improving their status’. While a change in intra-household income patterns may lead to a change in gender relations within a household, it cannot be concluded that this will result in the improved status of women. Indeed, a growing body of literature now questions the simplistic correlation between labour force participation and women’s status. These studies do not question the value of cash income in women’s lives, but rather its association with increased female status. Not only is such an equation between income and status predicated upon a dominantly Western view, it also fails to recognise that the factors determining women’s status may be culturally specific and multidimensional rather than unidimensional.

Associated with the view that women’s status will improve if they move into ‘productive employment’ is the implicit assumption that women must move from the ‘traditional’ sector to the ‘modern’ sector to achieve self-advancement. Such a view is predicated on two main assumptions: the modern sector is socially progressive and a necessary precursor to self-advancement, and ‘traditional’ work roles are inhibiting to self-development. That these assumptions also
underpin modernisation theory reveals that WID, rather than offering an alternative approach, remains wedded to existing mainstream development frameworks. Further, the close alignment of integration and modernisation means that they share other common problems. For example, both see development as a linear cumulative process, ‘traditional’ structures as static, and consider anything ‘modern’ as advanced and ‘traditional’ as backward. Thus it was accepted that, with the right inputs and incentives, the ‘traditional’ Third World woman could be transformed into a ‘modern’ woman, based largely on the image of the Western woman.

Finally, the reliance on modernisation theory justified the argument that women needed to be integrated into development before they could be part of the development process. Modernisation theorists measure development by GDP, which only records formal sector activities. Since women were not seen to be contributing to the formal economy, then they were seen as not contributing to ‘development’. In this way Third World women were unproductive, under-utilised and, as the World Bank put it, ‘in a sense wasted’.21

The categorisation and portrayal of Third World women

When the spotlight of aid institutions shifted to women, a category was created that standardised and homogenised Third World women. Under this label ‘Third World women’ all have the same needs and interests, and all are seen as equally disadvantaged. Moreover, Third World women are generally portrayed as universally unproductive, economically inactive, house-bound, tradition-bound, lacking skills and perceived to be relegated to lower-status tasks than men. This (mis)representation of Third World women is evident in the following extracts from AusAID and World Bank documents:

men can seek work in towns, learn skills in the army or go to high school, while women stay at home, or at best, work as maids or at unskilled tasks in industries. Even the latter occupations are usually preferable to low productivity, low reward employment or underemployment at home.22

[women’s] productivity and capacity to work is often constrained by culture and tradition, which often keeps women homebound, while men go into the outside world.23

human capital investments help women break out of traditional molds, move outside the family, behave more like other economic agents.24

new ways should be tried to build the self-confidence mothers need to adopt new behaviors and participate actively in maternal and child health and family planning programmes.25

Such views are common in the WID discourse of the major aid agencies and have helped construct an image of Third World women which, as Parpart notes, stands in contrast to the image of the skilled, confident and modern Western women.26 The representation of Third World women has recently been explored in the broader development literature and in postcolonial studies.27 However, what is of interest here is how aid agencies’ construction of Third World women
finds parallels with the colonial discourse on women mentioned earlier. Third World women continue to be portrayed as universally passive, oppressed and ignorant, an image that continues to rely on the binary oppositions used in colonial discourse. Thus, Western stereotypes of Third World women remain unchallenged in the so-called ‘alternative’ WID approach.

Of serious concern is how this portrayal of Third World women has influenced WID practice. For example the view of Third World women as underutilised and unproductive was particularly evident in the WID efficiency policies of the 1980s, and lent support to the notion that women had the capacity to work even harder, or had the free time to participate in a range of WID interventions. The assumption that women were underutilised overlooked one of the major problems facing many Third World women: that of increasing and/or heavy work burdens. While women’s workloads vary greatly, accumulating evidence from many parts of the Third World suggests heavy workloads constrain women’s ability to provide adequate food and childcare and limit their opportunity to participate in extra-village activities. Such misconceptions regarding women’s work burdens may partly explain the problem observed in some developing countries, where ‘development’ has simply meant further additions to women’s already heavy work burdens, and may help explain the failure of many special women’s projects which aimed to encourage women to take on additional tasks such as skills training, poultry projects or other income generating activities.

More importantly, the use of the universal stereotypical image of Third World women as powerless, ignorant and trapped in inferior roles has legitimised an approach that views Third World women in need of help and with little to contribute to development planning. A major feature of integration efforts of the large international aid agencies is that, despite their rhetoric, Third World women have been allowed very little genuine participation. Project planning techniques to integrate women into development projects continue to restrict women’s involvement as projects largely remain externally operated and controlled. Rarely is project design, decision making and management devolved to local women. Rather, integration efforts are characterised more by the assumption that, only through the assistance and direction of Western donor agencies can Third World women become productive members of society and achieve self-advancement. Indeed, the modern educated Western female WID ‘expert’ was created in aid agencies to direct this process. Thus, integration efforts have not only ignored the realities of women’s lives, but Western stereotypes of Third World women have fostered an approach where women are given little control over how, or whether, they desire to be integrated into development projects. This issue of control in development plans is explored further below.

Categorising Third World women as an undifferentiated group fosters a view that they all have the same needs and are equally disadvantaged. Such assumptions ignore the diversity of women’s lives and overlook differences in wealth, power and status between women attributable to structural factors like class, caste, clan and marital status. In some situations it may well be that intra-gender differences in work patterns and resource control are just as important, if not more so, than inter-gender differences. For example, in many clan-based soci-
eties, where the population is characterised more by its social heterogeneity than uniformity, an understanding of women’s work patterns and income control, and access to land and other resources, may be better explained by differential access to resources along clan lines rather than by gender differences *per se*. It is possible that the reason why WID practice has all but ignored inequalities between women stems in part from its emphasis on integrating women, and its priority on gender inequalities over other inequalities. These two factors have side-tracked issues of wealth and resource inequalities among women. Yet, by ignoring inequalities between women, WID attempts at encouraging participatory development projects based on the notion of common needs and goals are fraught with problems. Moreover, WID risks reinforcing and/or accentuating inequalities between women. The danger of WID practice not benefiting poor women was raised in the early stages of the UN Decade for Women. However, such criticisms have not shifted many donors away from the assumption that all women are equally disadvantaged.

Similarly, some women’s groups are more powerful, better networked and positioned than others to receive aid money. My own research has shown that several women’s organisations funded by AusAID’s WID Fund, were urban-based, and/or well established national or local organisations, with close contacts with external funding bodies. Representatives of two organisations said they had no difficulties procuring funds from funding bodies. While not detracting from the good work these organisations do, nor ignoring their valuable work with disadvantaged women, AusAID (and other organisations) need to strive to identify and support more isolated rural women’s groups or less powerful urban women’s groups that may have difficulties securing funds. By recognising diversity among women and women’s groups a more equitable allocation of WID resources may be possible.

Valuable insights are to be gained from studies that examine the diversity of situations among women and which provide a more comprehensive and appropriate analysis of women. Mayoux studied the failure of income-generating schemes in West Bengal and found that the official explanations for the failure of training schemes (constraints on women’s movements and the uneconomic basis of handicraft development) were incorrect. Her detailed analysis revealed that the project failed because it was inappropriately designed and targeted. Mayoux identified four different groups of women in the area, whose caste level, work demands and needs differed. The majority of participants in the scheme were from the upper castes, which greatly reduced the scheme’s success, as many of these women did not intend to use their new knowledge. As Mayoux remarks ‘[m]any had taken the courses, for example, in order to gain an advantage in the marriage market or a certificate for professional work. Some had simply wanted the stipend’. By contrast, the poorer groups of women who, it was officially recognised, would make most use of the scheme, were poorly represented among participants. Mayoux attributed this to administrative barriers and discrimination, and to the design of the scheme, which was unsuitable to the needs of poorer women.

Mayoux’s study is significant for several reasons. First, it exposes the myth of Third World women being an undifferentiated group, and shows that not all
women are impoverished, nor do they face the same set of restrictions on opportunity. Some women are clearly in a more advantageous position than other women (and men) because of their marital, kinship, class or economic status. Second, her study highlights the importance of detailed analysis of the target population in order to design appropriate and suitable development initiatives. Third, it shows how WID activities can discriminate against poorer women if differential status and needs among women in society are not recognised. With continuing reports of increasing poverty and wealth inequalities in Third World countries, the targeting of disadvantaged groups of women appears to be of crucial importance.

It should be noted, however, that by highlighting diversity among women it is not suggested that there are no socioeconomic characteristics or needs common to most women. Women generally do carry heavier workloads than men and they do comprise most of the poor. But these generalisations cannot be assumed to apply in a similar way everywhere. More importantly, they should not serve to restrict further analysis at the micro level. While macro assumptions and studies are worthwhile to provide a general view of an issue and/or highlight a particular problem (eg high workloads of women), they can distort our understanding of a particular situation or context if accepted axiomatically. Yet aid practitioners often extend generalisations unquestioningly to different countries, regions, cultures and populations—a problem common to much of development theory and practice.

In many ways therefore, integration has not encouraged donors to go beyond simply recognising women in their policies towards implementing policies and programmes that show evidence of a more detailed analysis and understanding of women’s situation in Third World countries. As Tinker notes, studies by development agencies have been ‘directed to influencing program directions or policy decisions’. Very few efforts are made outside the aid agencies at the village level to discover more about women’s needs and concerns.

*The privileging and power of the practice of integration*

The narrow focus on integration has also inadvertently led to privileging this objective above broader issues concerning the viability and appropriateness of prevailing WID and mainstream development practice. Many reports document the level of integration in donor aid activities and the reasons for the poor record of integration, but few seriously question the planning techniques used to promote the integration of women, or critically examine the benefits of integration. Hence there is little analysis of whether integration translates into genuine participation of women and this, I would suggest, is attributable to the belief that ‘gender sensitive’ projects will automatically benefit women. However, such an assumption ignores problems associated with the techniques used to integrate women into projects and the other shortcomings and biases surrounding aid delivery.

While western donor agencies have attempted to incorporate Third World women into development plans, they do little to encourage the participation of women. AusAID, like other international agencies such as USAID, CIDA, and the
World Bank, has trained many of its staff to apply gender-analysis frameworks/guidelines to the project cycle\textsuperscript{32} to ensure women are considered in project plans. These frameworks vary, but a common requirement is to collect gender-specific data on the division of labour, access to and control of resources and cultural restrictions on women’s activities, and incorporate these data into all stages of the project cycle.

Although gender analysis frameworks require the collection of baseline data, which is commendable and represents an advance on previous gender-blind planning, the usefulness of such frameworks is questionable for several reasons. First, the method is grounded in the concept of women as a separate socioeconomic category, and so underestimates the linkages and interactive nature of people’s lives. By compartmentalising women, the framework renders irrelevant the linkages between women’s various work roles, kinship relationships and the social, cultural and political systems of which they are a part. Women’s work activities, their access to resources and their needs are not isolated fragments, rather they are intricately embedded within the communities in which they live. To ignore these linkages predisposes simplistic and unrealistic analyses and constructs images far removed from reality.

In addition, by compartmentalising women, gender analysis techniques continue with development planning’s reductionist approach in isolating development ‘problems’ that need ‘fixing’. This categorising of problems is typical of much of development practice, which as Porter \textit{et al} point out, is based on the Western rationale that:

\begin{quote}
all aspects of life can be isolated into bits, whether they be complex agro-ecosystems or traditional knowledge systems. Following on from this it assumes that these bits may be removed, manipulated and then sometimes re-inserted into the culture, in order to bring about desirable outcomes in a controlled manner.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

It is this issue of control that is the most problematic with the gender-analysis framework, for it offers few opportunities for women to define and control local development efforts.\textsuperscript{44} Rather, the techniques tend to promote external control of development plans and project design. The project cycle, of which the gender analysis framework is a part, is comprised of a set of rigid ‘control-orientated’ planning procedures adopted by AusAID and other major donor agencies to overcome the perceived complexities and uncertainties of development. As Rondinelli notes:

\begin{quote}
international assistance organizations and central planning and finance ministries in developing countries adopted more detailed and rigid planning procedures in the late 1960s and early 1970s in an attempt to anticipate and eliminate many of the problems that had plagued development in the past. But in attempting to apply more comprehensive and detailed controls, planners often generated new conflicts and problems.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

Control-orientated planning, or ‘management science’ as Crittenden & Lea label it,\textsuperscript{46} is reflected in the use of log-frame analysis, cost–benefit analysis, elaborate activity/project cycles and more recently, gender analysis frameworks. All these management tools attempt to exert greater control over project outcomes, for it
is assumed that, once all the components of the project environment are known and controlled, the desired outcome will result. While these planning techniques may not be inappropriate in themselves, they may encourage a view among practitioners that more refined, sophisticated and rigid frameworks will enhance aid effectiveness through tighter controls. For this reason, these planning techniques are increasingly being criticised as inappropriate planning tools.

With this type of planning the overriding objective becomes one of ‘managing’ the ‘problem’. For example, an examination of AusAID’s internal WID reports monitoring the integration of women into the organisation’s development plans, reveals greater concern with how WID can be better managed or administered than with how AusAID can learn more about women’s lives at the local level. Their 1992 WID Review reflects this emphasis on improving aid management as many of the recommendations generally relate to tightening project and program procedures. In its recommendations to improve the integration of women in bilateral aid projects the report suggests this can be achieved through:

- developing screening mechanisms in project processing: ongoing staff training programmes for staff administering projects: developing more targeted WID training for staff... raising of individual management capacity in addressing WID in economic infrastructure sectors; providing WID briefing for project management and consultants: and ensuring critical WID input into project processing.

Similarly last year in a major review of AusAID’s aid programme, recommendations were made to introduce regular gender audits, reassess WID monitoring tools and allocate more staff to gender monitoring and staff training to strengthen the integration of gender concerns in the aid programme. Thus, the assumption that greater control over the planning process will lead to more effective aid delivery is well entrenched in WID initiatives. In other words, the ‘women problem’, identified and constructed by aid agencies, can be solved through more rigid planning. No-one has yet challenged this assumption and hence the view that Western nations know how to solve the problems of Third World women is reinforced. More disturbing, perhaps, is that, by controlling development practice, Western donors continue to place themselves in the position of ‘experts’ who hold the solutions to the problems of Third World women. As indicated above, it was out of the efforts to integrate women into development that the skilled Western WID ‘expert’ arose—considered competent in project cycles and gender analysis techniques, and in possession of the required knowledge to improve the lives of Third World women. Third World women play only a secondary role in this framework.

**Conclusion**

At the beginning of this paper I argued that the 1970 push to integrate women into development had limited success because it was based largely on the narrow tenet that aid practice was male-biased. From this basic premise it was assumed that a more gender aware or gender-sensitive approach to development practice would be sufficient to deliver economic and social benefits to women. However,
as I have suggested in this paper, one of the main problems of WID relates to the way the major aid agencies have clung to this early concept of integration. By concentrating primarily on integrating women into prevailing development practice, WID/GAD does not really offer an alternative approach to mainstream development practice, as many of its assumptions, strategies and notions of ‘development’ remain firmly rooted in existing development frameworks. The problems found in mainstream development practice, such as misrepresentation and over-generalisation, the use of rigid project frameworks, and the limits placed on Third World people to define and control their own lives, remain in the WID/GAD approach.

The issue of participation and control over development is of major concern and, as Boulding remarked, rather than questioning how women can be ‘integrated into development, the question should have been what do women want’? Her remark reveals how Third World women were given little say in the way development initiatives were planned in the early stages of the UN Decade for Women. It is somewhat disturbing that Boulding’s comment continues to ring true today as project planning techniques continue to restrict women’s involvement in a development process where projects largely remain externally operated and controlled. In the current integration efforts of large donors there is little emphasis on harnessing indigenous knowledge and expertise, and opportunities for women to design and manage their own projects remain limited.

The need to allow indigenous people greater control over development is not new and has long been recognised, especially among non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Although major aid organisations have increased funding of projects designed and implemented by local women’s groups over the past 10 years, it is still only a small part of their aid programme. For example, AusAID’s WID Fund, which began in 1984 and was the main scheme to support small-scale innovative projects designed and implemented by local women’s groups, had a budget of Aus$3 million. This represented a tiny proportion of the total aid budget of just over $1500 million in 1994/95. In 1996 the WID Fund was abolished in a rationalisation of AusAID’s NGO programmes, without any evaluation of the effectiveness of the scheme. Although other avenues are open for indigenous women’s groups to apply directly to AusAID for project funding, these are extremely limited. Finally, although efforts to allow women more control over development initiatives are being addressed by some of the major aid donors, further research, discussion and negotiation relating to the control of projects is required among aid practitioners, aid organisations and local people, particularly given the problematic nature of participatory development.

Notes
I am grateful to colleagues in the School of Social Sciences and Asian Languages, Curtin University of Technology for helpful comments on a draft of this paper.

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT


10 For examples from the South Pacific region see Jolly & Macintyre, Family and Gender in the Pacific.

11 H Ware, Women, Demography and Development, Canberra: Australian National University, Development Studies Centre, 1981; Blakie & Brookfield, Land Degradation and Society.

12 Ware, Women, Demography and Development.


GINA KOCZBERSKI


22 Australian International Development Assistance Bureau, Report of the Committee to Review the Australian Overseas Aid Program, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1984. The report was part of a major review of the Australian aid programme, and had a considerable impact on the types of programmes and policies later introduced by AusAID.

23 World Bank, Women in Development.

24 Ibid, p 38.


29 The WID efficiency policy aims to ensure development is effective and increasing women’s economic participation and their productivity in the formal economy. Low education levels and unproductive technologies are identified as the main constraints affecting women’s economic participation. Efficiency policies are closely associated with structural adjustment programmes.


32 See Parpart, ‘Deconstructing the development “expert”.


34 Mayoux, ‘Beyond naivety’.


36 Koczberski, ‘Women in development’.


Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations

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Volume 9, 1998, 3 issues. ISSN 0959-6410

Carfax Publishing Limited
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E-mail: sales@carfax.co.uk • WWW: http://www.carfax.co.uk

409