Closing the Gender Gap

Gender and Australian NGOs

ACFID

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL
FOR INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

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Author's note

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This report is intended to contribute to the debate about faith-based and secular development organisations.

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Sexual Health & Family Planning Australia

TEAR Australia

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Union Aid Abroad – APHEDA

Unitingworld

WaterAid Australia

World Education Australia

World Vision Australia

WWF – Australia

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There is a feature of institutional failure in development [and that is]… the persistent failure of public service delivery agencies to include women equitably amongst the 'publics' they ostensibly serve. **(Goetz 1992: 6)**

'[S]ome of the problems identified are symptomatic of a wider systemic problem in addressing gender inequality.' **(DFID 2006)**

Introduction

Gender in development has been an issue for development agencies – NGO, bilateral and multilateral – since the mid-1970s and the Mexico Women's Conference when the first women and development (WID) approaches were agreed, with the intention of addressing women's absence from development discourse, planning, and decision making. Since then, and particularly following the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, thinking about how best to further gender equality has evolved from an exclusive focus on women participating in and benefiting from development projects towards addressing gender inequality. In particular, the focus moved towards transforming unequal power relations between men and women (and the implications of this including female poverty and disempowerment), and the promotion of women's human rights more broadly, in and through development interventions. Gender and Development (GAD) frameworks recognise that enabling women to participate in and benefit from development requires a focus on women and their status and rights. This must sit alongside strategies that engage men and women in working together towards mutual goals and greater equality, and address the wider social, economic, cultural and political factors that perpetuate women's inequality. Most bilateral, multilateral, and non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) have developed clear, strong gender policies which address inequalities in access to development resources between men and women as an important part of their development activities, with gender mainstreaming the primary tool for integrating gender considerations.

While some progress has been made in the fields of education and health, overall, the history of gender integration and implementation has been one marked by inaction (or at best partial action and limited follow up), despite virtually universal commitment at the level of goal and strategy. The Goetz quote at the start of this paper would seem to be as relevant today as it was 20 years ago. A 2005 review of gender equality strategies among nine OECD bilateral donors found very significant 'policy evaporation' in the progression from commitment to implementation and resourcing (van Reisen and Ussar 2005). There were similar stories across the agencies about key challenges (e.g. a lack of appreciation that all activities have a gender dimension), and what makes a difference (involvement of gender expertise in planning and design (e.g. see AusAID 2002; DFID 2006; ADB 2010), specific responsibilities for gender (e.g. DFID 2006)). The 2006 OECD DAC peer review of the Netherlands identified the inclusion of gender equality in strategic plans and in embassies' annual planning and reporting processes, as one of the factors that has avoided the problems with mainstreaming experienced by other donors (OECD 2006). Embedding responsibility across organisations at all levels via mandatory requirements, incentive-based approaches and good management practices has been identified as a priority (e.g. AusAID 2002), yet little progress has been made. The bilateral donors, however, are not alone: most development assistance organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, have not yet institutionalised approaches for addressing gender issues in their work[1].

The situation in Australia is consistent with this general picture. AusAID and NGOs have struggled to develop and implement workable gender policies which redress gender injustices (Kilby and Olivieri 2008). AusAID (and ADAB/AIDAB, its predecessors) have conducted a number of reviews of Australian NGO effectiveness (and similar studies on gender), including a study for the 1975 Mexico Women's Conference, the 1995 NGO Effectiveness Review, and the 2010 draft review of the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), all of which have pointed out that while NGOs are generally effective, they are weak on gender and NGOs themselves perceive this as a problem.

This assessment is supported by anecdotal evidence through the ACFID Gender Equity Working Group and from NGO accreditations, which point to limited gender policy development or poor gender policy implementation as an ongoing issue for Australian NGOs. Where agencies report a focus on gender equality in key public communication documents such as annual reports, the language used suggests 'gender' is more often associated with specific women-focused initiatives than integration of gender equality considerations into all activities (Berg 2010). However, the sector does not have a detailed picture of how NGOs are approaching gender and development, where the specific challenges lie, what is working and what the associated enabling factors are.

This research report seeks to fill a gap in the publicly available evidence regarding factors influencing gender integration in Australian NGOs, and to use this to shape recommendations about the development of gender capacity in the Australian NGO sector, with the aim of accelerating progress towards gender equality. It presents research undertaken between August 2010 and February 2011 with a sample of fifteen Australian NGOs, together with a comparative literature study of the integration of gender by other international organisations and NGOs. The report begins with an outline of the rationale for the research. It then examines the literature on gender and gender mainstreaming with a focus on the experiences of two multilateral agencies, UNHCR and UNDP, two bilateral agencies, AusAID and DFID, and the experiences of NGOs in other countries, particularly developing countries. The third part of the report looks at the experiences of Australian NGOs and proposes ways forward.

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1 Interaction website, http://www.interaction.org/caw/services.html. This assessment is confirmed by OECD peer reviews of donor performance and independent evaluations of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID 2006) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NIURR 2005).

A key finding of the report is that as we head towards the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Women's Conference, significant progress has been made in integrating gender more fully into agency programs, with most of this occurring in the last five years. There are good examples of good practice, but also gaps in capacity identified. Performance and accountability mechanisms, however, remain under-developed and resourcing of gender-informed work does not match the level of policy commitment or the priority suggested by the visuals used in agencies' public communications, particularly those associated with fundraising. The report concludes with recommendations on ways to build on the gains already made and capitalise on the policy and programming efforts of agencies.

Merbilly Pitadunga, APHEDA (Union Aid Abroad) (Photo: Bonney Corbin, IWDA)

Part 1: Gender and development

Setting the context

Gender and gender mainstreaming

Use of the term 'gender' to distinguish the social construction of differences between men and women from biological differences goes back to the 1950s but came into mainstream usage in the 1970s and 1980s. However, in more conservative contexts, 'gender' has been seen as a stalking horse or cover for radical feminism, and so for many is not seen as a useful term in such settings. There is also criticism that the focus of the concept 'gender' is largely on women, and if there is engagement around men it is in relationship to women. The problem with this construction of gender is that it leaves out same sex gender issues including the marginalisation of gender minorities, as well as same sex gender-based violence and abuse (Dolan 2011 forthcoming).

The term 'gender mainstreaming' is also problematic. It arose out of the Beijing Women's Conference as an attempt to move away from 'women and development' approaches which, while important, did not deal with the structural issues that led to women's marginalisation and disempowerment relative to men in society. Much gender work that focused on women lost the gendered dimensions of exclusion and failed to make sense of the complexities of gender and power (Cornwall 2003). The hope was that gender mainstreaming would overcome these complexities by providing a process to promote gender equality within society (Walby 2005). One part of this was to improve the broader policies and practices of organisations, to make sure they were gender sensitive by 'making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes' (p. 321) that drove policy and practice. There are two broad aspects to this: the gendered nature of the organisation, and the gendered nature of the work, which is where most of the focus has been.

Gender has tended to be dealt with as a stand-alone policy and set of issues in development work, so that when the gendered nature of policy is challenged, this is generally not in the context of other causes of inequality. Ethnicity, religion, age and disability are a few of the factors that can interact with gender within development contexts, resulting in greater marginalisation and inequality for women (Walby 2005: 322). While there has been focused work on 'intersectionality', including a symposium in Australia in 2006 on gender and intersectionality in development, gender is not systematically considered as a factor that interacts with and deepens other forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

Since the Beijing Conference on Women, gender mainstreaming, to the extent it has been implemented as a strategy, has been implemented within what could be called an 'integrationist' model which has tended to depoliticise the issue of gender. In practice, a gender perspective is introduced into organisations' policies in a bounded or partial way, as a technical exercise, without challenging the underlying – arguably patriarchal – paradigm in which an organisation and its program is set, and is thus regarded by some as little more than 'tinkering at the edges' (Smyth 2010: 148). Treating gender as a stand-alone issue and not challenging the basic gendered paradigms of power weakens the response of development agencies, and paradoxically, has also led to a decline in resources devoted to program and projects that explicitly address women's disadvantage or support women's organisations, with the argument that women have been mainstreamed and additional resources are not consistent with this approach (Smyth 2010).

Walby (2005: 326) argues that for gender to be effectively mainstreamed there needs to be 'three legs to the [gender mainstreaming] stool':

- Equal treatment of women (and men) in interactions with them, and this would also include in development projects and programs – an *inclusion* approach;

- Incorporating a women's perspective, which would mean listening to and including women in planning and the like – a *participatory* approach;

- A gender perspective, which would mean a power analysis to look at how gender relations are affected by particular work in particular contexts – a *gendered* approach[2].

The implication of this approach to mainstreaming is that gender would be located more centrally in agencies' work, and in the organisations themselves. To date, most studies indicate that the first two of Walby's 'three legs' are pursued with varying degrees of success, and with little argument. The third leg, however, is rarely part of the analysis and is most resisted. Goetz, in the early 1990s, and others have argued that this is because '…public administration is itself gendered [to effectively] promote the interests of men' (Goetz 1992: 6). One could argue that this applies beyond the public administration context in which Goetz employs it, to include both religious and other organisational forms, including NGOs.

Since the early 1990s there has been some progress in dealing with gender in public administration in developed

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2 Emphasis added

western settings, but in developing countries, and in some sectors in developed countries, little has been done to reduce fundamental institutional constraints linked to gender and power. The result is that the 'pathologies of women's marginality' (Goetz 1992: 6) are often reproduced rather than challenged, reflecting an institutional failure in development itself, in terms of advancing women's interests. Part of this is to do with the institutional context in which they sit (Walby 2005). Goetz goes on to argue that the real problem is that the connections between gendered social relationships in the home and community and gendered organisational relationships are not being made. The acculturation of men and women within their households and communities, outside their work organisations, affects their behaviours within them (Goetz 1992; George 2007), with a conformity to local norms often being necessary for women's and men's survival (Wendoh and Wallace 2006).

It is difficult to challenge these norms through large-scale development assistance programs where centrally-determined frameworks often lead to rigidities and can limit adaptation to local cultures. The way work is reported and the policies implemented are themselves the source of rigidities, and for the project officer   '…theirs is not to reason why but to produce evidence of compliance' (Curtis 2004: 417). While there is some movement towards use of more organic models, project staff are often involved in linear processes that override consideration of local needs, contexts and causal relationships. What Smyth calls the 'diktats' and non-negotiables (Smyth 2010: 148) of policy in the end do not count for much, as there is a marked disconnect, often to the point that policy becomes the problem rather than the solution. Mosse questions whether the practices of development are in fact concealed, rather than produced by policy (Mosse 2004: 640) and this is arguably as true of gender as any other policy.

Overall it would seem the opportunities for advancing gender are still limited, and where they do exist they are often marginalised. There are institutional barriers as well as institutional opportunities within organisations to advance gender, but the slowness of change indicates that it is the constraints that exert greatest influence on the operating environment. As Goetz argues, these institutional barriers:

> … are not reflections of something immutable in women's social position; rather, they are the consequence of treating organizational rigidities as immutable (Goetz 1992: 12).

While organisations have moved to some extent, this study confirms that institutional barriers are still in place, especially but not only in developing country contexts. These barriers to a large extent come down to the people in organisations (Wendoh and Wallace 2006)[3].

History of gender in development organisations

International experience

As noted briefly at the head of this report, gender practice in development has been an issue for development agencies – NGO, bilateral and multilateral alike – since the mid 1970s and the México Women's Conference, when the first women and development approaches to aid and development were agreed to. This followed on the tail of innovative groundwork from USAID and others including the 1973 Percy Amendment to the US Foreign Assistance Act, which called for targeted programs for the greater inclusion of women (Razavi and Miller 1995), and subsequent work through the adoption of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979.

Since these landmark agreements and then the 1995 Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, bilateral, multilateral, and non-governmental organisations have all agreed to develop gender policies, which address inequalities in access to development resources between men and women (Kilby and Olivieri 2008). Despite these developments and associated momentum, while some progress has been made in education and health, overall, gender integration in development continues to be weak. Despite virtually universal commitment at the level of goal and strategy, the implementation of gender equality policies has proved challenging.

The conjunction of Beijing +10 and MDG +5 activities in 2005 prompted some detailed reviews of mainstreaming and progress towards gender equality in national and international development agencies. For example, a 2005 a review of nine OECD bilateral donors found very significant 'policy evaporation' in the move from commitment to implementation and resourcing of gender program addressing the rights and marginalisation of women (van Reisen and Ussar 2005). The report presents similar stories across donors about key challenges (e.g. the lack of appreciation that all activities

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3 Wendoh and Wallace use the following typology to describe approaches to engaging with gender: gender blockers, gender sceptics, gender masqueraders, and gender embracers. While these types are largely self-explanatory, we would argue that it is often the gender masqueraders that are hardest to engage, as they believe they are already doing what is needed to meet the demands of policy makers and donors.

have a gender dimension) and what makes a difference (for example the involvement of gender expertise in planning and design, specific responsibilities for gender, mandatory requirements, incentive-based approaches and good management practice) (DAC 2006). The conclusion reached in most reports is that '…most development assistance organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, have not yet institutionalised approaches for addressing gender issues in their work' (DFID 2006: 4).[4]

The findings of a 2005 evaluation of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) policy over the period 1997–2005 are typical of the challenges identified:

> *Norwegian development cooperation has placed strong emphasis on women and gender equality (W&GE) for many decades. The administration has been receptive to gender mainstreaming in policy goals [but] … much less receptive to institutionalising this concern (NIURR 2005).*

The conclusions and recommendations from the UK Department for International Development's (DFID's) evaluation of its gender policy present a similar picture:

> *DFID has made important contributions to gender achievements at policy and practice level. However, contribution and impact is uneven… [and as] the internal environment has not sufficiently supported the pursuit of gender equality, there is a danger that gender equality goals fall by the wayside (DFID 2006: 1.)*

DFID's evaluation found that where gender had been integrated into the agency's performance management framework it has helped institutionalise gender equality but the outcomes were much less successful elsewhere. Monitoring of gender equality targets needed to improve at institutional and intervention level, accompanied by an 'audit mechanism to ensure updated monitoring and evaluation guidelines are adhered to' (DFID 2006: 2).

The story is similar in the United Nations family. The Commission on Human Rights (now the Human Rights Council) has called for regular reports by Special Rapporteurs on the advancement of women's rights but the reports '[suggests] a resistance to or a misunderstanding of gender mainstreaming … [and] by referring to women and children, reinforce women's identity and value as [only] mothers' (Charlesworth 2005: 10). For the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) there has been little progress on gender relations and changing the agency's ostensibly gender-blind approach, despite 80 per cent of refugees being women and gender-based violence and other gender-related issues being endemic in camps run by UNHCR. As Shedlock argues:

Women participating in a power analysis of decision-making about natural resources within their community, part of the design process for an IWDA-Live and Learn Environmental Education (Live & Learn) project in Solomon Islands (Photo: Sally Asker, Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney)

> *Easily and consistently ignored throughout most the UNHCR's history, women unavoidably make up the largest segment of the refugee population… [but] by denying the power of gender upon refugees the UNHCR does not have to address women refugees [as women] (Shedlock 2009: 100).*

Likewise for UNDP, the process of change was very slow, but here some progress has been made. In the early years, gender was at best an add-on: in evaluations undertaken in 1978 and 1985, only one

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4 The World Bank's Operation and Evaluation Department has made similar findings World Bank (2005), World Bank (2010).

in six projects that affected women actually involved women (Razavi and Miller 1995b: 14). Following these findings a gender division was established in 1987 with a mandate to mainstream gender through guidelines, training and project review forms, but little progress had been made by the end of the decade. A 1989 study of 11 countries found that 'none of the countries explicitly mentioned women's concerns nor made reference to the importance of women in priority sectors' (Razavi and Miller 1995b: 17). Again, more than a decade later, the UNDP acknowledged that:

It is difficult for development organizations to promote structural change in power relationships between men and women. It is an inherently political process, one that is likely to be contentious and challenging to institutions and individuals (Hijab and Lewis 2003: 9).

An evaluation in 2006 showed little progress on key findings from earlier reviews, namely that gender mainstreaming has not been visible and explicit; there was no corporate strategic plan for putting the gender mainstreaming policy into effect; and what steps had been taken were too simplistic and mechanistic, and so gave mixed signals about UNDP's commitment (UNDP 2006: ix). The follow up institutional assessment at last found some improvement in most areas, though not in relation to a supportive institutional framework (UNDP 2009).

The integration of gender in bilateral and multilateral agencies has not been well supported by high-level aid effectiveness efforts. The 2005 Paris Declaration did not directly mention gender equality, highlighting the gap between the rhetorical and actual priority accorded to gender equality. Country-led approaches and aid modalities such as budget support, sector approaches and harmonisation present new challenges for gender equality work, restricting the number of policy issues to be presented and reducing the ability of donors to directly influence how partner countries allocate money (DFID 2006).

The lack of attention to incorporating gender in the institutions, systems and mechanisms being developed for a post-Paris Principles context risks perpetuating the failure of donor and partner countries to meet commitments on gender equality (Gaynor 2006). There has been growing acknowledgement that the Paris Principles are an important part of the agenda to reduce poverty through reaching gender equality (e.g. CIDA 2008). But agencies are a long way from a systematic focus on integrating gender in harmonisation and accountability mechanisms, in building on existing strengths of national actors, strengthening national capacities or in supporting regional and national political processes.

The lack of priority accorded gender mainstreaming is also reflected in, and perpetuated by, inadequate financing.[5] As the UN Secretary General noted in a report to the fifty-second Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2008,

> *The global commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women at national level have yet to be fully implemented. Unless financial resources are mobilized across all sectors, through both domestic and international channels, progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women will remain slow. (E/CN.6/2008/5: 18)*

Australian experience

The picture in Australia is similar to that elsewhere, with both AusAID and NGOs struggling to develop and implement workable gender policies which address gender injustices (Kilby and Olivieri 2008). ADAB (later to become AusAID) introduced a Women and Development Policy in 1992 (ADAB 1992), which was updated as a Gender and Development Policy following the Simons Review in 1997 (AusAID 1997). This required AusAID to integrate a gender perspective throughout the aid program, with the needs, priorities and interests of women and men considered at all levels and stages of development activities (Downer 1997).

In 2000-01 AusAID reviewed the degree to which the policy was understood by staff and consultants, the extent of mainstreaming, and the program's overall quality (AusAID 2002). It found there had been progress in mainstreaming gender but policy implementation could be improved at agency and activity levels. The extent to which the needs and perspectives of women and men were integrated varied considerably and was significantly affected by whether a gender expert was involved in design. 'Generally AusAID staff and contractors did not appreciate that all activities have a gender dimension' (p.7). These findings were in line with the GAD experiences of other donors (e.g. DFID 2006). A separate expert assessment around the same time underlined individual behaviour as the primary mechanism by which gender equality was promoted within AusAID: 'The history of progress on addressing gender equality in AusAID is largely a history of individual effort from below…'(Hunt 2000: 30).

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5 See, for example, Progress in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development, implementation and evaluation of national policies and programmes, with a particular focus on financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women: Report of the Secretary-General, Commission on the Status of Women, Fifty-second session (E/CN.6/2008/5) and the related Report of the Secretary-General on financing for gender equality and empowerment of women (E/CN.6/2008/2). See also the series of facts sheets developed by the Association for Women's Rights in Development as part of the series 'Where is the money for Women's Rights?,' http://www.awid.org/About-AWID/AWID-News/Where-is-the-Money-for-Women-s-Rights-Factsheets

Reliance on the ongoing leadership of committed individuals rather than institutionalising approaches brings significant sustainability risks. The OECD's 2005 peer review of Australia found that 'visibility of gender … is not as high as expected given AusAID's strong commitment and significant investment of resources... This may be related to the high level of staff movement and turnover... In line with the experience of other bilateral donor agencies, implementation has proven more difficult than policy formulation' (OECD 2005: 13). The OECD urged AusAID to better bridge policy and practice '[with] a new way of thinking supported by adequate guidance, appropriate expertise capacity, consistent implementation mechanisms and relevant monitoring tools' (p 49).

The 2006 aid White Paper moved gender equality to being a 'core principle' to be 'actively and rigorously pursued' in a significantly larger aid program (Downer 2006). It presented the promotion of gender equality as a way of reinforcing the aid program's overall strategic framework (AusAID 2006: xi). A new gender equality strategy was released (AusAID 2007), applying to the whole of the Australian Government overseas aid program.

The Annual Review of Development Effectiveness 2007 (AusAID 2008)[6] identified 'meeting gender equality commitments' are one of five strategic priorities to improve aid effectiveness, again recognising that 'Many of the world's leading donors acknowledge that their gender equality policies have not translated into actions that make a difference on the ground' (p.x.). The Office for Development Effectiveness (ODE) also squarely confronted the consistency of the history to date and posed the key question:

> *Given that the development community is peppered with such good intentions [regarding progressing gender equality], why will the 2007 policy stand any better chance of being implemented than previous AusAID policies or those of DFID, the World Bank or Oxfam, all of which have pointed out that their good intentions have not translated into actions that make a difference on the ground?*

Consistent with the risks identified in 2007, the 2009 the Annual Effectiveness report to the Government found that AusAID's gender policy commitment 'has yet to be translated effectively into performance results' (AusAID 2010: 50) and that where gender components have been built into any activities, 'they are usually peripheral and rarely sustained' (p. 52) and do not influence AusAID's strategic direction.

As mentioned in the Introduction to this paper, a similar story can be found with regard to NGOs. For example, the 1995 Effectiveness Review, which was based on self-assessment confirmed by a sample of NGOs visited by a review team, found that '...the success rate for involving women in projects was lower than for any other question' (in the review) (AusAID 1995: 32). Anecdotal evidence through the ACFID Gender Equity Working Group, and from NGO accreditations, similarly points to either poor gender policy development, or poor gender policy implementation as an ongoing issue for many Australian NGOs. The ACFID *Voice and Choice* report (December 2009) concluded that gender equality does not seem to be 'mission critical' to accountability debates within, or amongst, most Australian NGOs (Roche 2009: 3) and that 'There is weak recognition of the impact that NGO leadership and organisational culture have on effectiveness … and on issues of gender inequality and power relationships…' (p.7)

The NGO experience in other countries

Among NGOs internationally, the story is much the same. For example in Africa there has been little change in practice: '… in spite of years of gender training, gender mainstreaming and gender rhetoric from donors, governments and NGOs at all levels' (Wendoh and Wallace 2006: 11). Between 1994 and 2004, most NGOs seemed to merely replace the word 'women' with 'gender', and as far as they were concerned '...the word gender meant integrating women into development activities along with men … [while] feminists agendas were unaddressed' (Desai 2005: 94). The difficult issue was that while 'gender' needed to be 'transformative and change local realties', it had to be based on local ways of seeing the world and local approaches to changing attitudes and behaviours (Wendoh and Wallace 2006: 25). In contexts where women are regarded as 'guardians of culture', transformational work and opening up gender norms is challenging and requires both commitment and courage (Sweetman 1997).

In East Africa there have been some changes in gender relations due to the changing reality of poverty and the shifting global economy including the spread of HIV/AIDS. This has also been borne out by the experiences of Australian NGOs, as noted later in this paper.

Local conflict in communities can result when rights-based and similar approaches, designed to address gender and other inequalities and promote empowerment of marginalised women, are perceived as undermining the influence of

6 This was informed by a detailed performance report on gender equality (AusAID 2008b).

traditional power holders, and may be resisted by men while being applauded by women. Rather than seeing such conflict as potentially constructive and capable of being managed, Wendoh and Wallace found that many local NGO staff responded defensively or conservatively and assumed that there was no potential or opportunity for gender transformation: '…gender was not possible in the office or at home … the gender coat was put on when they went to communities and taken off when they came back to the office' (p. 56). While the family in Eastern Africa is seen by many as '…being a site of deep inequality and disadvantage' (p. 63), much of the gender work that has been done by NGOs and other agencies with women tends to ignore their roles in the family (Hunt and Kasynathan 2009). This is not helped by the fact that internationally, data continues to be collected at the household level, reinforcing the lack of attention to intra-household inequalities.[7]

Wendoh and Wallace found that there was often little acceptance by the trainers of the gender training they were providing; their involvement was due to persistent top-down encouragement from donors, which ultimately served to exacerbate resistance to gender work (Wendoh and Wallace 2006: 76). Another study from Malawi found that there was little effect from gender training; there remained a general unwillingness among NGOs to hire women staff, and to apply what they had learned in gender training to alter the behaviour of males and females towards their co-workers (Tiessen 2004): '… [the] status quo of male leadership and power is maintained through paying only superficial attention to women's equality and minimal attention to tackling women's strategic interests' (p. 699). These findings suggest that behaviour change requires agency-wide initiatives.

In East Asia, Yang's study of Oxfam Hong Kong produced similar findings: head office in Hong Kong had written a good gender policy but there was a lack of useful tools or gender guides for implementing the policy (Yang 2010). As a result there was little evidence of a gendered approach in the field work, and staff only mentioned gender because they were required to in reports. The lower priority afforded gender in practice was reflected in tight budgets for gender work, the lack of good staff resources to address gender and a lack of appropriate training, all of which contributed to a misunderstanding of gender and its role in the field.

The role of religion

Religion is a often a source of resistance to gender equality advances and the realisation of women's rights, as the interpretation of most religious texts across the major religions has a strong male bias. There is some movement, with mosques and churches being open to the involvement of more women in a wider range of roles, women's organisations within faith traditions advocating for interpretations that enable women, and some focus internationally on working directly with and within faith communities to advance gender equality. However, this openness tends not to extend down to the household level at this stage. While religious organisations have long been important in aid programs (Lissner 1977), they are arguably now becoming more so (Tadros 2010). The range of religions on the ground means that inevitably some can be involved to varying degrees in what Tadros calls '…covert politics and power relations [in ways] that are not always fully recognised in the development literature' (p.7). Of course this is not necessarily problematic, as such influence can be for a social benefit, but this should not be assumed.

For example, Tadros noted that the majority of women who are in civil society organisations are also in religious groups, which often have strong views on appropriate behaviours, especially in relation to sexual and reproductive matters and the role of women in the public sphere. Tadros argues that such religious bodies do not necessarily pursue locally-driven grassroots priorities, but often advance a broader agenda, which may be welfare-focused and lead to local changes in culture and gender practice. For example, in Eastern Europe the rise of more socially-conservative and well-resourced Wahhabi Islamic schools was at the expense of the more liberal local Hanafi schools. This led to negative changes in gender relations and attitudes in those countries (Tadros 2010). Similarly, religious-based prohibitions on women mixing with non-kin men in the workplace has the effect of making the workplace more masculine (Goetz 1992). Kandiyoti (2011) argues that in order to disentangle religion and politics, the focus should be on the actors and their interests and practices rather than the religion per se, and on finding positive examples of engagement with religion around women's rights (Balchin 2011).

In this paper religion is identified as having an important influence on how gender is dealt with in practice within NGOs and by their partners, as all major religions are based on a patriarchy. How these traditions are engaged with is central to the success, or otherwise, of gender mainstreaming in most development contexts. For example, in India during the late 1990s, in the context of the rise of Hindu fundamentalism:

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7 IWDA and ANU are currently involved in a three-year, multi-partner international collaboration to develop a new gender-sensitive approach to measuring poverty at the individual level; for more information, see www.genderpovertymeasure.org.

… the Indian women's movement has often made its demands for gender equality on the basis of universal definitions of women. In the current political climate, this has invoked criticism from Muslim women, who argue that this indicates a lack of cultural sensitivity at best and prejudice at worst (Burlet 1999: 45).

In such environments the engagement between religion and feminism or women's rights can be fraught, and requires sensitivity if advances are to be made. This point will be explored further when discussing Australian NGO experiences[8].

In the field

It is in the field and in the programs and activities of local NGOs (and their donors) that gender policy is put into practice (or not). Effective gender work requires a good understanding of the local context and entry points for addressing gender inequalities, and an ability to see the relevance of gender. However, the capacity of local NGOs to work in gender-informed ways is often an area for development, with staff themselves part of a culture that ascribes particular gender roles to women and men.

Often the work of local NGOs involves poor or limited analysis. Nevertheless, programs can still gain momentum as being focused on women's empowerment and having clear gender dimensions, even when this may not be the case. Microfinance is one area of NGO development work where women are targeted and which is often regarded as gendered. There is a broad literature on microfinance and some of it is well-evidenced and quite critical in terms of empowerment outcomes. Some critics argue that, rather than engaging women's agency and power, microfinance program can limit it (e.g. see Hunt and Kasynathan 2001). Goetz found that women: '…receive credit in much smaller amounts than men, training is for low-profit, sex-stereotyped activities, and unlike men, their programme membership may be made conditional on their acceptance of family planning measures (Goetz 1992: 7). Of course a well-run microfinance program based on self-help groups can have quite different empowerment outcomes (Kilby 2011). The point here is that microfinance programs targeted at women per se are not good examples of gendered programming. The provision of savings and credit services will have varying gender impacts depending on how and the context in which they are provided. Similarly, small income generation projects targeted at women can see women stuck in low-wage poverty traps if education, skills, caring responsibilities and limited capital restrict their options to ones that provide a poor return on labour.

Rights-based rather than livelihood approaches are sometimes more successful. For example HelpAge in Tanzania compiled a shadow report to CEDAW on the level of gender-based violence against older women in Tanzania. This was picked up by CEDAW and led to policy changes by the Tanzanian government (Sleap 2009). Networking, another favoured approach, can have quite mixed results. While arguments for networking and exchange among agencies and women within agencies is a worthwhile strategy (Murthy 1998), competition among NGOs can weaken the capacity to network: 'understanding the power relationships (formal and informal, hidden and overt)' between organisations is critical to our understanding of advocacy on gender-related concerns in developing country contexts (Nabacwa 2005: 40).

One factor underlying assumptions that certain kinds of activities will benefit women and the consequent poor results in the field is poor or limited gender training. If training is undertaken in an uncritical manner, without analysing the appropriateness of particular gender frameworks to a specific context, it can reinforce rather than challenge gender stereotypes (e.g. women as victim or men as innately violent). To be effective, training needs to be anchored in a wider agency philosophy and policies, not added on:

…training a few staff in the application of frameworks will never be adequate, or appropriate, particularly if there is a lack of direction or coherence in terms of an overall policy in which this work can be framed (Warren 2007: 191).

The Helen Keller Foundation (HKF) in Bangladesh had some very positive experiences based on a different approach to gender training: 'Gender training should be a reflexive process that engages with the lived realities of the staff and exposes concepts of inequity at a personal level' (Hillenbrand 2010: 422). HKF gender training engaged participants in debates about contested gender issues.

Here they had a chance to role-play gender terminology concepts, act out and analyze media messages, and play 'gender jeopardy', which presented global and Bangladeshi trivia on gender disparities. The approach throughout the training was fun, but not tentative (Hillenbrand 2010: 422).

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8 The expression 'faith-based organisations' is often used in NGO discourse. This can be problematic as it suggests a commonality of type and purpose. It assumes faith is seen the same way across religions and society; and secondly, it can take on a normative flavour in how it contrasts itself with secular organisations, which themselves are often based on deeply held principles and beliefs (Balchin 2010).

Where this approach was used, projects achieved quite positive gender changes, underlining the importance of bringing staff along in the journey; otherwise staff can reinforce the inequities that underlie existing cultural belief systems. The problem that HKF found though was that 'While guidelines for mainstreaming gender exist in abundance, culturally specific gender training materials for organisations are harder to find' and they had to develop their own (Hillenbrand 2010: 423).

A guide developed by IWDA and the Institute for Sustainable Futures to support NGOs to work effectively with both women and men in water, sanitation and hygiene projects in Melanesia makes this issue explicit, and key to working constructively with communities on gender equality:

> *The people who work in NGOs and the organisations that employ them and support them have a big influence on how successfully projects work with women and men. The people in NGOs are part of the culture too, and their views about men's and women's roles and responsibilities are influenced by social expectations as well as by their studies and the policies and processes of the organization (Halcrow, Rowland et al. 2010: 32)*

Also Oxfam's *Gender and Development* journal focused on the issue of cultural change in and through development organisations as far back as 1997, and many of the challenges, insights and approaches documented there remain useful in anticipating issues and planning to address them with partner organisations.

Communities planning for the future, Live & Learn Solomon Islands (Photo: Bonney Corbin, IWDA)

Part 2: Gender and Australian NGOs:

Mapping the current state of play

Research background and methodology

The genesis of this research lies in earlier research by one author on gender issues with local NGOs in India (Kilby 2010; Kilby 2011), and the ongoing interest of the other author to better understand the issues and challenges within NGOs regarding gender equality work. The questionnaire and focus groups undertaken with a sample of 15 NGOs sought to explore the enablers and constraints to good gender practice within Australian NGOs. The research in India suggested three reasons why gender is weak in local NGO work: the gendered nature of the society in which the NGO is embedded, often with strong patriarchal norms; the lower status accorded gender compared with social categories such as class, caste or ethnicity etc; and the dual role of government as regulator and donor, and the development policies pursued (Kilby 2010).

This research explores gender from the 'donor' NGO perspective, in order to map the current approaches, and identify factors contributing to any gaps between policy and practice. The research asks three key questions:

• To what extent are gender equality issues 'mainstreamed' in policy and programming?
• What is the evidence of gender in policy 'framing' and content and in institutional mechanisms and procedures?
• What is the extent of understanding, ownership and resourcing?

The research was undertaken in October 2010 and January 2011 in Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. It involved surveying 15 NGOs[9] which had gender policies that met the accreditation criteria to receive AusAID NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)[10] funds. The sample size constitutes around one third of NGOs in the ANCP. A purposive stratified sample of twelve agencies ensured that a range of faith-based and secular, small, medium and large NGOs were represented. Three further agencies that had been identified as having a specific gender focus (CARE, IWDA, and TEAR Australia) were included to provide comparison. However, during the research it emerged that other agencies such as ActionAID and Anglicord also had a specific gender focus, and others had strong gender integration across their work, so ultimately, this initial distinction was not useful and so was not used in the analysis.

The first stage of the research involved an online questionnaire with broad questions about gender in the agency, including expenditure estimates. This provided an overview to assist the researchers in framing the focus groups questions. The focus group discussions followed the online survey and sought the views of at least two key informants in each organisation, but generally more (up to 10 in one case), to explore:

• How is gender seen within the organisation?
• Does the organisation support women/men-only projects and in what contexts?
• Are there projects that look at specific gender issues (e.g. gender-based violence)?
• How did the organisation develop its gender policy and what were the drivers?
• Does the organisation attempt to assess its gender work; and what are/would be the challenges in this?
• What are the barriers and enablers to integrating gender in the organisation's work?
• What are the priorities for support and capacity development?

The data from the questionnaires and focus group discussions was collected and analysed, and the report and findings follow. The information was provided on the basis of confidentiality, and any references to specific agencies and their work are with their explicit agreement. Overall the response to the research was very positive with only one agency declining to participate in the research; the remaining agencies were very responsive with most putting a lot of effort into providing time and information to support the research.

Overview

It is fair to say that Australian NGOs have struggled with the implementation of gender policy and practices since the mid-1980s when women and development policies and programs were being developed, and the first WID funding from AusAID was available. In the mid-1990s, when gender was being 'mainstreamed' following the Beijing processes, it also became a greater focus in NGO accreditation. However, while there has been a specialist NGO looking at women's rights and gender and development since 1985 (IWDA), it is fair to say that at the time of the research, gender was not the central focus of any other Australian NGO, and it is only in the 2000s that some agencies started to build a stronger gender focus in a more systematic manner.

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9   These were ActionAid, ADRA, Anglicord, APHEDA, CARE Australia, Caritas Australia, CBM Australia, Fred Hollows Foundation, IWDA, Oxfam Australia, Plan, Save the Children Australia, TEAR Australia, WaterAid, and World Vision Australia.
10 All NGOs who receive AusAID funds are required to be accredited according to set of criteria set by the Committee for Development Cooperation, a joint committee of AusAID and elected NGO representatives, and accreditation is renewed every five years. Having a gender policy has been a requirement since the 1990s, but in the 2000s the application of that policy has also been tested. See AusAID (2010) Accreditation for Non-Government Organisations http://ausaid.gov.au/ngos/accreditation.cfm (accessed 25-02-2011)

In the past five years, TEAR has developed a comprehensive program to socialise gender justice more strongly and strategically across the agency, which has contributed to the sustainability of the nascent gender focus in its work. ActionAid[11] and CARE Australia have a gender justice or women's rights focus as the central driver of their work, and ANGLICORD, a small agency with a small program largely looking at HIV/AIDS, has also taken a highly gendered approach to its work. The other ten agencies surveyed all highlighted gender as being important to varying degrees in their work but have noted that as a policy, gender was often in competition with other policies for attention and resources for improved practice.

Attempts to mainstream gender by some agencies had been sporadic and ran the risk, as one respondent put it, that 'gender becomes the responsibility of everyone but ends up being everywhere and nowhere'. Overall, gender practice was variable across and within most of the agencies surveyed, with sharp differences across countries and regions in how gender was interpreted and implemented. In those countries where gender-related issues were in the public eye, such as gender-related violence in the Pacific, or HIV/AIDS in Southern and Eastern Africa, gender-related programming to address these issues was possible. In most other areas, gender was seen through the lens of women's livelihoods, a focus which may or may not result in positive gender outcomes. The livelihoods focus has as much to do with the approach and attitudes of NGO partners in developing countries as it does the Australian NGO's role. Most respondents indicated that working on gender issues in the 'private' space of the household was very difficult, and it was only when issues spilled over into the 'public' space that there was some legitimacy in dealing with them, for example with HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence.

The term 'gender'

An important issue that arose in discussions was the term 'gender' itself. For the agencies surveyed, gender generally has as its focus addressing women's marginalisation and disadvantage. The term has caused problems for a number of agencies, for varying reasons. For some faith-based agencies, their religious hierarchy saw gender in very broad terms, and as code for sexual practices at odds with their moral teachings. In other cases the partners of agencies saw 'gender' as a western-based concept at odds with local culture and traditions. Only one agency, Oxfam Australia, is beginning to deal with same sex gender issues through its program in South Africa where it is working with a human rights organisation to deepen understanding of sexuality and identity to better employ broader gender strategies in its HIV/AIDS work.

These issues with terminology are important as they can influence the way in which gender as a term is interpreted in partner communities. They did not constitute an insurmountable obstacle for any of the agencies surveyed, but the meanings invoked by the use of particular terminology is an important issue for consideration by policy makers and those tasked with developing action plans and gender programs.

The state of policy

Findings from the research with these Australian NGOs indicate that, overall, there is a high level of gender awareness at an organisational level, but that only in a few cases did it reach what one agency called a 'mainstream consciousness'. Often there is a gap between what agencies say, and what they do. While all have gender policies and most have associated action plans, or evidence of the implementation of the policy, all respondents reported a strong sense that routine gender mainstreaming was still absent. Adherence to guidelines, action plans and policy was patchy at best, and tended to reflect the efforts of committed individuals rather than systems requirements. Apart from focussing on livelihood projects for women, gender is still a relatively small component of NGO programs in most regions, and was not present across the board in any of these agencies' programs. For many, 'gender' was seen as a compulsory component of project designs (one among a list of others) rather than something that was 'second nature', a way of seeing all development work.

Few agencies see gender as an overarching priority. Only three agencies had gender as central to their planning, while another two agencies had a very strong gender sectoral focus. A number of agencies saw gender as one of a number of competing policy priorities and had difficulty in reconciling them. For example, environment, disability, HIV/AIDS, and child protection were all mentioned as competing policy priorities, rather than as priorities with clear gender dimensions. TEAR Australia had developed a strong gender dimension to the agency's policies and priorities. Its Board had been trained and had a role of applying a gender lens over all policies and holding management accountable for performance

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11 ActionAid prefers the terms 'women's rights' to 'gender', which the agency considered had lost a lot of its meaning and had become depoliticised, to the point that the participation of men and women in activities was enough. For ActionAid, 'women's rights' emphasised that gender equality was about changing power relations.

on gender.[12] CARE, Caritas Australia, Oxfam Australia, IWDA, World Vision and TEAR Australia have all conducted gender audits at least once with varying degrees of follow-ups. Oxfam and CARE have extended the process to country offices, and World Vision Australia has been supporting other WV National Offices in conducting their gender audits and has provided resources for these, particularly in Eastern and Southern Africa. Caritas Australia had organised training for both Board and staff in gender issues as they effected its internal context, as well as gender and development training for international programs staff.

One agency had a diversity policy that did not include gender, and while this was seen as a big gap, respondents said the perception was that they could not 'spread themselves too thinly across all sorts of diversity factors'. The gender dimension of child safety and HIV/AIDS, as examples, were not picked up in these policies in a number of agencies. Some agencies had specific policy frameworks for particular countries; for example, ADRA had a policy framework for its work in Papua New Guinea, which included a strong focus on gender-based violence. CARE Australia has supported its partner offices in Laos, Myanmar and Papua New Guinea with financial and technical resources, to develop four to five-year gender strategies outlining what work needs to be done, both organisationally and programmatically.

The AusAID accreditation process is an important policy driver. In a small number of agencies, a gender policy was in place because it was required by AusAID, but for most agencies the accreditation process provided an opportunity to review and update policies. While agencies were aware of AusAID's gender policy, only a small number adopted it as their own, and for some it was seen as a starting point from which the organisation developed its own policy. The five-year cycle for accreditation is seen as providing a good timeframe for policy review.

The link to accreditation does have some disadvantages. It can translate into a burst of enthusiasm and then a tailing off of commitment until the next round of energy as the agency begins the preparation for the next accreditation. This cycle reflects in part the reality that monitoring an organisation's gender policy is usually delegated to a few enthusiastic staff (generally women), often with few champions in management to confirm that performance on gender counts.

Converting policy into practice has been a major challenge for agencies. In some cases, agencies had very detailed policies and implementation guidelines that had been regularly reviewed, but these had been largely ignored as there were no mechanisms to ensure compliance, and no regular policy monitoring processes in place.

International partners

The role of international partners is an important factor influencing the approach of many agencies. Over the last decade, while most NGOs have been part of loose groupings of like-minded agencies in confederation-type structures, the rapid growth in funding together with pressure for reducing costs has meant that NGOs are starting to pool resources within these federations in a more focussed manner, including through common programming, rationalisation of countries of operation and local branding or marginal adaptation of materials produced internationally. This has created opportunities to advance the agenda on gender. In some instances, the Head Office or lead agency in a federation has been very active in promoting gender across the affiliates (see ActionAid box) while in other cases, the Australian affiliate has been able to use international arrangements strategically to push for a stronger focus on gender and strengthened policies, practices and accountability arrangements across the partnership. An example of this was CBM which argued for a stronger international policy using accreditation as one of the arguments.

ActionAid international partnership

Women's rights is one of seven thematic areas on which ActionAid focuses; all development projects address women's rights, either as stand-alone focus or as a cross-cutting concern in other themes, programmes and functions. An International Women's Rights Team (IWRT) with six full time employees is located in the International office and supports all country programs. In addition, women's rights co-ordinators are recruited within each country program to promote women's rights (ActionAid operates in over 40 countries). ActionAid Australia is part of a federal structure; net spending units and 'net contributing units' (of which Australia is one) take their policy lead on gender from the IWRT in the head-office in Johannesburg, South Africa. For the next few years, the women's rights focus is on sexual autonomy and bodily integrity (SABI), women's land rights and unpaid care. The latter focus is an important emerging issue in relation to the largely ignored contribution that women play in caring for people affected by HIV/AIDS as well as elderly parents, children and grand-children, on top of the work they do work in the formal and informal sectors.

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12 IWDA's board also plays this role, given IWDA's organizational focus.

In other cases, the international partnership has provided a mechanism for aggregating resources and information to support high-level research and analysis that draws on examples from across the partnership and informs the further development of gender work. For example, in 2010, CARE Australia, along with other members of the CARE partnership, was able to add a local introduction and contact details to a four-year research report on its approach to the empowerment of girls and women prepared by Care International, based on a review of CARE's approach in 24 countries on three continents (see Box). This illustrates the significant strategic potential of international partnerships in gender work: using the benefits of scale to aggregate often scarce gender resources; promoting a common approach to gender equality across regions that is informed by local examples and experiences of what works; and enabling members of the partnership to raise the profile of gender work through local branding and release of the research without having to bear the full costs locally.

The research identified a further group where the international partner had a weak understanding of gender and at best saw it 'just as disaggregation of data'. Evidence of the real impact of taking gender into account (or failing to do so) was needed for international partners 'to fracture these ideas', as one agency put it. For many of the respondents, the big issue was overcoming complacency and the feeling of 'we've done gender, let's move on.'

CARE Empowerment Framework

CARE International developed and tested a Women's Empowerment Framework that helps make explicit its definition of empowerment (so that others may understand, challenge and engage on this) and ideas about how it can be measured. This is now used across the CARE international partnership. The impact research has fostered a culture of critical thinking in CARE and outside (papers describing this research have been made publically available to disseminate the knowledge generated (http://pqdl.care.org/sii/default.aspx).

CARE defines women's empowerment as the sum total of changes needed for a woman to realise her full human rights – the interplay of changes in agency, structure and relations. As CARE moves towards a long-term program approach (10-15 year programs), based not on sectors or geographic areas but on impact groups, having in place a common framework helps it to better analyse the specific priorities and constraints more holistically across women's lives and identify the 'what' and 'how' to support durable social and structural change.

Religion, gender and culture

The organisations surveyed were an even mix of religious and secular NGOs. A key point made by the religious NGOs was that in the countries in which they work, religion is key to people's lives and their identity. Religious NGOs often see themselves as having a comparative advantage in being able to relate at this level. In practice, this was not always the case, and respondents cited examples where partners had severed the relationship on the grounds of different scriptural interpretation. There were, however, other examples from World Vision Australia where the partner NGO was able to work through gender and scriptural interpretations in a respectful manner, with clerics and with families (having husbands and wives together for such discussions can work in situations where this is some openness). Religion can also provide an entry point for discussing gender. For example, the Pacific Churches Partnership enables a close examination of gender-based violence as the churches arguably can engage with the private space (of the family) more easily.

Religious-based NGOs still have to contend with, in the words of one respondent, '…the inherent conservatism and patriarchy within churches'. A strong criticism from religious organisations was that the Beijing Conference and Declaration, and how they were interpreted, had led to a view that gender mainstreaming was promoted by feminist extremists, and so a lot of good work within religions was lost at that time, and is only now being brought back in. Religious agencies see changing clerics' views and behaviours as an important step in achieving gender justice in places with strong religious traditions. This raises the issue of the role of partners and their voices in determining approaches and priorities, and the very legitimate question of the role of the donor NGO in raising and discussing sensitive gender issues. Many of the NGOs who took part in the research struggle to engage with this question, and prefer to avoid it and 'fudge the gender question', as one respondent put it.

Disability and gender

The intersection of gender and poverty with ethnicity is well researched and understood, but it is only relatively recently that this approach has been extended to gender and disability.

The links between gender and disability were important for those agencies in the study that specifically work with

disability. Disability programs can themselves involve specific gender issues. The interplay between gender, disability and poverty leads to multiple disadvantages for women with disabilities. Disability markedly increases the risk of gender-based violence (Barrett, O'Day et al. 2009) and is a potential outcome of violence (Vos, Astbury et al. 2006). Consequently women with a disability are more vulnerable to adverse physical and mental health outcomes (Walji 2009). When they have experienced gender-based violence they also face increased risk of experiencing high levels of stigma, discrimination and other rights violations including in relation to reproductive rights and sexual health (Astbury 2003).

Women in developing countries experience a range of barriers to accessing education, support and other services associated with their gender roles and responsibilities and with prevailing gender inequalities; these are magnified for women with a disability. The evidence shows, for example, that while women will come to screening, they will often not come for treatment because of barriers such as transport issues, costs, and time out of the home. Consequently, treatment and support for people with a disability can inadvertently focus on men. In some cases a historical medical approach to dealing with particular disabilities such as blindness has resulted in the predomination of male doctors and a gender-blind, technical response to treatment and support. Agencies have found that gender champions offer one way to overcome such issues. Where a local office had a gender champion with the disability, changes in practice and reach to women were more evident.

Giant lantern being lit for the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women in an unofficial refugee camp for Shan people in Thailand (Photo: Renae Davies, IWDA)

Fred Hollows gender training for eye health workers

Fred Hollows Foundation has developed its own in-house gender training for staff and partners working on eye health. The focus of the training is on the different issues experienced by women and men in accessing support and treatment for preventable blindness. In China, FHF experienced a lot of resistance to gender analysis and a program aimed at women. Following the gender training, which highlighted the disadvantages that women faced, there was a change in attitudes, which was reflected quite quickly in a change of approach and programming to better target women.

Internal structures supporting gender integration

As noted in the first section of the paper discussing aspects of the institutional history of gender in development, effective programming requires supportive structures which ensure gender is mainstreamed across the agency.

There was a range of responses from the NGOs in this review in terms of how they were building or supporting the internal scaffolding for gender integration. Most agencies had a gender focal point (either a dedicated staff person or a group with a particular interest in gender) but the activity and focus varied across the agencies, and gender responsibilities were often added on to an already busy workload. Overall, most agencies have trouble maintaining a strong and consistent gender focus over time. While some agencies had invested in internal capacity development, utilising these resources systematically to build and knit together a network of staff with commitment to and some expertise in gender-informed work was constrained by strategy, resourcing and staff turnover. ActionAid works with International Organisational Effectiveness to develop and seek resources for a women's leadership development programme aimed at strengthening women within Action Aid International with skills to enhance upward mobility. A female ActionAid Australia employee has benefited from this initiative.

Oxfam Australia has established a high-level Gender Coordination Group to provide overall leadership and over the last couple of years has expanded the time given to gender in its annual reflection process, culminating in a week-long review and analysis exercise in 2010.

Oxfam Gender Justice Week 2010

In October 2010 Oxfam Australian brought together 30 of its staff and partners' staff from regional and country offices, and Head Office staff, to review gender practice across the agency and explore drivers and barriers. This built on previous investments in gender training and identification of gender justice as one of four global program priorities, and addressed staff perceptions about gender identified in annual organisational climate surveys. Participants debated approaches and the mainstreaming of gender analysis; whether working with men was the right approach and in what contexts, and the need for a well-articulated theory on violence and power. Of particular relevance for the ACFID research were the three 'gaps' discussed:

- *The Culture Gap: gender inequality is deeply rooted in complex social and cultural relations that can and should be addressed by change processes;*
- *The Agency Gap: equality will not be legislated or 'given to women' – women's leadership, agency and organizations must be central to any development strategy that aims at transformative change;*
- *The Evidence Gap: what actually makes any difference? What are success factors of effective gender justice programming?*

World Vision Australia tracks and reports publicly against two gender measures in their annual report: average women staff members' wages as a percentage of men's; and the proportion of women in executive positions, and is the only agency to report this information publicly. The 2010 Annual Report shows that there has been some improvement in the gender balance at executive level over the past three years with half of the Executive now being women, and also for the salary figure, with a closing of the gender pay gap over time.[13]

For many agencies, and more broadly, the gender balance on the Board and in senior management is seen as an important indicator of commitment to gender equality. Some agencies have moved quite quickly to redress gender imbalance in these areas. Caritas Australia and CBM are good examples: over five years, a focus on this issue has seen the gender imbalance in both organisations turn around[14] and women are now in the majority in senior management and the Board.[15] While the term 'affirmative action' has not been used, clearly senior management and Board members have targeted women to fill vacancies as they have occurred, to overcome the previous gender imbalances.

Another factor that has been experienced elsewhere as being important to establishing a coherent and supportive context for gender-informed work (see section on International Organisations in this report) is a whole-of-agency approach. This includes training across the agency with a tailored approach for management and Board. Both Caritas Australia and TEAR Australia have taken this approach.

TEAR Australia and a whole-of-agency approach

In 2005, following accreditation, TEAR Australia decided that its approach to gender needed reviewing. In 2006 a gender focal point was appointed and a gender working group established, to carry the policy development forward. The working group invested considerable time in exploring how best to proceed in a way that would generate sustainable and substantive outcomes. A gender audit was undertaken in 2007 and found, inter alia: some credibility issues, where TEAR Australia was stringent with partners but less so internally; that gender was not perceived as being as important as other policy areas; that gender was not really understood, including some confusion around the meanings of gender and feminism; and that conservative Christian values were seen to be at odds with a gendered approach.

The gender audit findings provided a framework for planning and implementing change. The first step was Train the Trainer training for two Board members, three members of the (six person) leadership team and five other staff. The upshot of these processes was the recognition that gender was a core issue for TEAR Australia. In September 2010 the gender training was extended to all staff over one and half days, including a session to review the gender policy. In November the new gender policy was ratified. The next step is development of an action plan to implement gender justice priorities.

The Board has taken a leadership role on gender and has gender as a regular discussion point and issue on the Board agenda. The whole Board has participated in gender training facilitated by the two Board members who undertook the earlier Train the Trainer session. This Board training addressed how they functioned as a Board with respect to gender, how they should change, and how they might screen all policies.

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13 In 2008, women's salary as a percentage of men's salary was 73%, in 2009, 81% and in 2010, 84%.

14 This experience is consistent with that of companies in the private sector that have moved to identify policies, practices and cultural factors contributing to the persistence of gender inequalities within the organization and then developed and implemented specific objectives and strategies to reach them.

15 This raises the question of whether this constitutes a gender 'imbalance' that now needs to be addressed. The authors take the view that this should not be regarded as an issue to be redressed in the current context, for at least two reasons: the continuing and marked inequality experienced by women across many dimensions in the countries in which the organisations work – so an over-focus on women's empowerment and gender equality, were that ever to be an outcome of a female-dominated board, would not be problematic; and the substantial evidence that women as decision makers tend to be more inclusive in their approach, so a Board weighted in favour of women tends not to be inconsistent with inclusion. It should be noted in this context that IWDA has an all-female Board and maintains its exemption under the Equal Employment Opportunity Act to employ only women in line with its mission and the nature of its partnership approach with local (and predominantly women's) organisations.

The rationale for TEAR's approach was that when working with conservative partners and supporters, the organisation needed to take them with it on a journey of change, and the only way to ensure credibility and consistency was through a whole-of-agency approach.

IWDA: sharing stories from the field

As part of building knowledge and engagement and supporting a consistent whole-of-agency approach to gender equality, IWDA convenes regular informal 'Brown Bag lunches' to provide an opportunity for staff across the organisation, Board members and regular volunteers to hear from program staff returning from the field, or from visiting specialists, academics or program partner staff.

These sessions provide space for sharing personal experiences and challenges, knowledge, pictures and stories of change. They provide a means for keeping staff, Board and volunteers connected to the organisation's purpose and the nature of IWDA's work in the field towards women's empowerment and gender equality, regardless of formal work responsibilities.

A gender audit offers a valuable process to assist in pinpointing issues on which to focus, and providing a basis against which to track progress. Caritas Australia has conducted two gender audits, TEAR one and is planning another, IWDA has conducted one, as has Oxfam, which also tracks gender in its annual program review and its biennial organisational climate survey, WILAH[16]. CARE Australia, for example, is required to prepare a two-yearly progress report to the CARE International Board on implementation of a set of common standards outlined in the CARE International Gender Policy.

Maintaining momentum and ensuring these gender review processes were sustained and priorities acted on and monitored was a significant issue for agencies. Many agencies reported dealing with the sense that 'we have now "done" gender', so we can move on, rather than seeing gender as a critical ongoing consideration requiring regular planning, monitoring and follow-up audits and the like. Some agencies have identified gender champions to lead and support work on gender (e.g. TEAR and Oxfam) but this can lead to burnout and frustration, and responsibility for organisational progress lying disproportionally with committed individuals, and thus at risk if the champion leaves. As noted in the first section of the report, this has been identified as a weakness of many organisational efforts to integrate gender. Combining individual gender champions with institutional changes that support policy coherence and continuity, and integrating gender into all policy so it is not a stand-alone focus has been the approach of TEAR, for example, and Oxfam has made commitments in this direction.[17]

One point that emerged from the research was that the establishment of gender focal points or gender champions in partner countries had a quite marked positive effect in terms of gender outcomes. For example, in Nigeria a woman with a disability in the CBM office became a gender champion for working with women with disability and significantly influenced CBM Nigeria's approach to these women in their program. While the evidence of the positive role of gender focal points and gender champions was clear, none of the agencies had a gender focal point or gender champion in all of their country programs.

Gender in practice: WID-GAD

The research found that most agencies seemed to be largely undertaking 'women and development' programs with a focus on women as aid recipients, either stand-alone activities or specific components of a wider program, with livelihoods the main sector, often through microfinance initiatives. Overall, there were a relatively small number of programs and activities that were either working with men, directly dealing with gender justice issues, or were informed by and respond to detailed gender analysis. Some examples included IWDA's work with men in Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea on gender violence issues and its use of detailed gender analysis to inform the design of its 'Tugeda tode fo tomoro' program tackling natural resource management in Solomon Islands; and Oxfam's 'We Can' campaign in South Asia. While the majority of agencies could provide examples of where specific gender issues were being addressed, such as gender-based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), and the gender aspects of HIV, overall these made up a very small component of any mainstream agency's total program[18]. There was little evidence of strong gender analysis of the impacts of general development programs and how they affected power relations in the community and the family. When talking with partners, few agencies put gender as central to the conversation and agreements about programming; rather, gender was as a checklist item to be considered, along with other cross-sectoral issues.

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16 What's It Like Around Here. It is also worth noting that in the most recent WILAH survey a more deliberate and more in-depth assessment of attitudes and knowledge on the gender policy was undertaken, which threw up important issues about which parts of the agency needed more focus on gender issues.
17 IWDA takes a whole-of-organisation approach to promoting gender equality that combines both a stand alone focus on gender with integration of gender into all policy. But as a specialist gender agency, this is expected and thus not highlighted here.
18 As a specialist gender equality-focused organisation, IWDA is not regarded here as a 'mainstream' agency.

Women and men in Fiji contributing their views on successes, enablers and measures of engendering water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives, part of a research project involving ISF UTS, Live & Learn Fiji, IWDA and World Vision Vanuatu (Photo: Gabrielle Halcrow, IWDA)

Agencies clearly recognised a gap in humanitarian programming, with urgency and a traditionally strong male culture in the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance resulting in weak gender analysis and limited gender-responsiveness. Agencies such as World Vision Australia have recognised that 'gender and emergencies hasn't got enough attention'. For World Vision, improving this situation 'means understanding gender work prior to the emergency, and so how we can use the pre-existing information on gender in programming'. They also try to deploy mixed teams wherever possible.

Training

A common finding across all NGOs in the study is the perceived inadequacy of gender training among Australian NGOs, and concern about the generality of competencies around gender being sought in staff selection. Most of the training in gender that has been undertaken by agencies is in the form of 'one-off' basic or introductory gender training, or a brief section on gender in a one- or two-day staff induction. In 2007, ACFID offered gender training as part of its annual training offerings,[19] and in 2008 IWDA brought out Suzanne Kindervatter, head of the Commission on the Advancement of Women at ACFID's US equivalent, InterAction, and offered through ACFID an introduction to gender audits including a session targeted at senior executives and Board members. There has been no gender training offered by or through ACFID since then, but ACFID has scheduled another introductory gender training, to be provided by IWDA, in November 2011. The high turnover of NGO staff means that inevitably, many of those who participated in earlier trainings are no longer working in the same agencies (and indeed, some may have moved into other sectors or overseas). Given the time lag, any further agency- or sector-level training is unlikely to be able to build effectively on previous investments in knowledge and skills. While there are other sources of gender training for the sector, these are very limited. If ACFID is to support cumulative knowledge and skills development and build capacity to engage on gender issues in greater depth, it needs to establish a more comprehensive training and development program that provides for regular entry-level gender awareness and skills development and a rotating program of 'higher-level' or sector-specific courses.

Some agencies have offered training to staff from time-to-time, but generally, participation in gender training has not been a requirement of or prioritised by agencies, and in the context of busy workloads, there is limited take up. In some cases gender training is strongly supported and promoted to staff. For example ActionAid has a team of international trainers that conduct training in Australia every second year, and plans to conduct in-house gender training in the off year. World Vision Australia uses online gender training modules from USAID[20] to provide basic gender training for staff in specific sectors, which they work through together as a group in 90 minute sessions on a monthly or bimonthly basis. CARE has also found online resources useful to build gender capacity; for example, 24 CARE Myanmar staff (including administration and finance staff, guards and drivers) completed the IASC online course 'Different needs – Equal Opportunities' in early 2011 to prepare them for humanitarian responses. For World Vision, gender training and discussion on gender in sectoral areas is also undertaken through the WVA Homeweeks, held three to four times a year, where all staff are expected to be 'home' to attend training. There are also discussions on gender issues through lunchtime sessions (called Global Talkback), corporate devotions, and information shared through internal communications.

In another NGO, compulsory training was required for staff from 2005, but compliance was not monitored and the requirement subsequently lapsed. A few agencies take the view that gender is covered in post-graduate Development Studies courses, which most staff have done. However, with the exception of Victoria University, there are no required gender courses as part of general graduate training, and it is possible to complete masters-level studies having been exposed to only a small number of hours of teaching on gender. That said, some graduate programs and courses can have a strong gender component built in and there are gender specialisations on offer. However, it cannot be assumed that masters-level studies currently equates to an adequate working knowledge of gender.

19 IWDA developed and delivered the training for ACFID, with a focus on AusAID's new Gender Policy, and has a training facility that is made use of by other NGOs.
20 Similar modules are also available from the World Bank.

In terms of partner and field office training, two of the sample agencies had conducted Train the Trainer programs in recent years. The general response was that there is often quite strong 'push-back' from field staff and partners, generally on the basis that the concepts are too foreign/western: '…staff still haven't been able to deal with the cultural issues and gender issues together, and so culture is often used as an excuse not to deal with gender'.

The key issue identified by agencies was finding relevant training. While existing training covered the 'basics', agencies were grappling with how to further develop staff capacity through training that was context specific, for example, how to engage appropriately and effectively with cultural or religious groups that may have embedded patriarchal attitudes and interests. While some agencies have conducted this level of training, developing a tailored program is very expensive; some respondents suggested that like-minded agencies could come together for such training, to defray the costs.

Training is also required in the various specific techniques of gender analysis as agencies reported that staff often ask how to use them. However, this is less straightforward than some agencies imagine, as the various analysis techniques carry with them certain embedded values and should be used critically with some understanding of which tool is best suited to which context.

Train the Trainer programs, undertaken by TEAR Australia, Fred Hollows, and by IWDA, enable agencies to invest in the capacity to share gender knowledge and skills, within the organisation and with partners. There is an argument for stronger support for such programs across the board, as they provide one way to work together through blockages that can arise from partner attitudes and priorities. Train the Trainer programs give the opportunity for agency staff to engage in a structured way with their counterparts and use evidence from a particular context to show the specific or additional marginalisation experienced by women. For example, the Fred Hollows Foundation used a Train the Trainers approach to gender with partners, and within the context of an evidence-led training approach, was able to show the added disadvantage faced by women with a disability, and to change its partners' approach to the issue. As noted earlier, using online training to deliver some basic gender training seems to offer a cost-efficient way of engaging staff on the core issues. As a modality, online training provides the potential for both enabling broad staff access to basic gender training and a platform of core knowledge on which to build, in a way that frees up resources to be invested in more advanced context-specific training.

A third area of training discussed by respondents was training on gender within an organisational context. Both Caritas Australia and TEAR Australia had undertaken this type of training[21] and found it very useful. Here, rather than looking at gender and development issues, the focus is on the way in which organisations are gendered and how to address the gendered nature of organisational structures, systems, processes and policies. Exploring ways in which gender barriers can be embedded in how an organisation works should lead to more complete mainstreaming; if, from the Board down, an agency is more aware of how gender bias can be expressed through organisational systems and processes and the unintended but predictable consequences of this, it may more readily appreciate the need to apply a gender lens to all of the organisation's work. Understanding the internal enablers and constraints and what is required for a coherent approach to gender equality can put agencies in a stronger position to engage with partners and programs in a more complete manner.

The paucity of gender trainers in Australia was raised during the research, along with concern that the high demand for experienced trainers may mean that the available trainers may not be sufficiently skilled or experienced in particular contexts or sectors to be able to undertake strong Train the Trainer programs or organisational training. A way forward would be a mapping of gender training programs and trainers in Australia and coverage of sectors and contexts. Some agencies which are part of larger networks such as ActionAid have periodic access to international trainers who visit every two years, but this training is often brief, and so could be enhanced with more follow-up training within Australia.

Barriers to and enablers of good practice

A key barrier to good gender practice, which can also be an enabler, is securing sufficient support and 'buy-in' from senior management – what one agency referred to as 'political will' – to invest time and resources on integrating gender in the organisation's work. A number of respondents noted that if management makes gender a priority, things get done; but in the context of competing demands, if gender-informed work is not visibly a priority for which performance matters, then it will remain on the margins. While the leadership of all the NGOs in the study were supportive of gender work, with the exception of a small number of agencies, leadership was generally passive, preferring to let the gender lead person make the running. One consequence of a lack of visible leadership and formal accountability mechanisms is that consistent implementation of and compliance with procedures is relatively weak; a common refrain was that policies and procedures were in place but they were invariably not being followed, and this did not have consequences.

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21 Or in the case of TEAR, focussed gender justice in the organisation as the framework for practice across its operational program.

The development of gender groups and focal points is an important enabler, and most of the agencies in the study had such groups in operation. These provide a focus, peer support and a means of sharing information including about effective strategies. A key issue for these individuals and groups is to find the resources (mainly time) to be able to be effective in their work. Close and active involvement of agency leadership helps in two ways: by confirming that gender is seen as important to working effectively and responding appropriately to the needs of both women and men, rather than one of a number of issues to be covered off in what is usually a crowded agenda; and providing an environment that supports compliance. The only current mechanism for compliance is through the accreditation process which is every five years and it is quite noticeable (and natural) that the focus of energy on gender integration is around that time and it falls away in the interregnum. The revised ACFID Code of Conduct approved by agencies in 2010 will support more regular agency review, reporting and strengthening of performance on gender as it comes into effect.

Another barrier is the perception that gender is a western-led issue and is, to some extent, driven by western feminists with little regard to local culture. To some extent, such perceptions point to lack of engagement by agencies with local women's organisations at country level, but they also reflect the marginalisation of women from decision making and the limited resources and space available to women in many of the countries in which agencies operate. Some agencies have sought local ownership for progressing gender by providing the evidence, in that context, of the injustices and marginalisation that occurs, by talking through gender issues that may be relevant to a particular culture, and by working with local gender equality advocates to understand local priorities and spaces for advancing them.

The move to global programming by many agencies is both a barrier and an opportunity. In those partnerships which do not have a strong global gender policy, the Australian agency can take a lead by virtue of accreditation requirements and so be able to strengthen the global policy applicable to all affiliates. In the case of ActionAid, the global program had a very strong gender focus and this was reflected in affiliates including Australia. In the case of World Vision Australia, gender has been a criterion for assessing eligibility for funding for new projects. The guidelines that are issued to partner National Offices stipulate that gender has to be strongly integrated in the new concepts, without which project concepts will not be funded. This guideline is an important lever for more purposive gender integration as well as providing an opportunity to raise the bar of WV National Offices' understanding and capacity on gender.

As noted earlier in the paper, deepening gender awareness and the ability to 'see' gender in the everyday work of the agency through investment in gender training can be a significant enabler of change, but unless it is made part of how the organisation does its work, gender remains vulnerable to changes in staff and priorities.

Ways forward

There has been little systematic practice across the sector in moving the agenda forward. The ACFID Gender Equity Working Group (GEWG) has been active since 2003. While it has played an important information sharing, peer support and networking role and pursued a number of strategic initiatives as well as contributing to ACFID's annual budget submission, a 2008-09 consultative review of the GEWG noted that activity was inconsistent and impact was heavily reliant on the commitment of individuals. The review found that the group had been most successful when members were mobilised around a specific task.

The GEWG invested considerable effort in the 2010 review of the ACFID Code of Conduct, seeing it as a strategic opportunity to reflect and specify understandings about the links between gender equality and effective and sustainable development. However, the specificity of the gender language in the initial draft drew a mixed response from the wider membership and the next draft included more general gender references and was less specific in the proposed accountabilities. That said, the revised Code that was approved by the membership in October 2010 includes significantly strengthened expectations and accountability regarding gender equality, and recognises the link between gender and development effectiveness. However, despite the important changes and progress being made within individual agencies as described in this report, there is still much work to be done if gender is to be regarded as 'mission critical' – a way of working that is integral to ensuring development policies and practices work for both women and men.

This section identifies a number of ways forward that have emerged from individual agency experiences and which could be adopted more broadly across the sector. These include promoting gender champions, better networking, coordination and collaboration, more rapid sharing of effective practice, a more active involvement of men, regularly and systematically reviewing policy and practice, a more nuanced approach to capacity development, stronger engagement of agency leadership, and a comprehensive gender training program for the sector.

Gender champions: Gender champions, in-house and in-country, offer one way of providing leadership and fostering understanding and engagement regarding the incorporation of gender analysis and gender equality objectives. Most

of the agencies surveyed had internal gender groups and gender champions though a few noted that this was something missing from their approach. Fewer agencies had gender champions in country and certainly not in all countries or all programs. These staff can demonstrate the value of a gendered approach in a local context, identify entry points and pathways for productive dialogue on gender, and bring the legitimacy that can come with being local.

Networking: Networking can be helpful in negotiating gendered spaces and sharing successful strategies, both in an EEO sense and to advance gender equality in an organisation's program. Attempts to set up networks of women development workers have had a mixed record, particularly at a leadership level. Meetings of women chairs and executive directors have been organised at ACFID Council but a more regular follow up with a good spread of representation

Women in Vanuatu contributing to research about successes, enabling factors and measures of engendering water, sanitation and hygiene initiatives (Photo: Naomi Carrard, ISF UTS)

has been harder to achieve. However, the most recent incarnation of a Women in Development network has focused on activities that seek to engage a wide range of participants, with a particular focus on involving younger women. It is important for female agency heads to take a lead in advancing the gender agenda – because they are in a position to widen pathways and address barriers, and because they provide role models that confirm the potential for women's leadership in development organisations.

Information sharing: Access to practical information about approaches that are effective in particular contexts can remove perceived barriers to integrating gender, particularly for non-specialists. Timely sharing of good resources, approaches and learnings can be particularly important in a context of limited resources for gender, and can help to amplifying the impact of available resources, enabling access to current knowledge and supporting more rapid uptake of good practice. Enabling systematic and timely sharing of gender resources in a way that encourages their use (eg accompanied by authoritative up-to-date guidance on what information, tools and resources are most useful in which contexts, where to find out more information etc) will require investment, as the history of the ACFID GEWG to date indicates. The ACFID Code of Conduct Implementation Guidance resource provides a site for consolidating and communicating some of this information.

Further development of mechanisms that enable regular sharing of information between government and non-government gender focal points, such as the AusAID-ACFID workshops on gender equality and violence against women that have been held twice-yearly since 2009, would support stronger sector-wide exchange and collaboration to accelerate good practice.

Strategic collaboration and cooperation to accelerate gender equality: gender focal points within agencies struggle for the time they need to support their agency's own requirements. The GEWG has managed to organise to take advantage of some key strategic opportunities, but more routine, ongoing provision of a whole-of-sector gender perspective on development issues, collaboration on initiatives, and sharing knowledge and experience is needed to accelerate progress towards entrenching gender as 'core business'. This will require dedicated sector-level resources. The six secretariats funded by the Commonwealth Office for Women to work across the domestic gender policy space provide examples of potential ways of sharing and working collaboratively to advance gender equality that are enabled by dedicated resourcing. Instituting a twice-yearly roundtable mechanism or some other pathway for regular policy dialogue between the ACFID GEWG and AusAID on gender and development policy, as exists in relation to a number of other policy areas, would support a stronger focus on gender and timely identification of policy opportunities and constraints, to accelerate overall progress.

Involving men: involving men more in gender work can assist in affirming that gender is everyone's business, a way of thinking and working that is central to development effectiveness. It is still the case that the majority of people in most optional gender training are women and specific gender workshops at conferences are also dominated by women. Successfully involving men more in gender events (such as training and guest seminars) may require cultural change so issues of gender justice are seen as the responsibilities of both male and female staff, in relation to program management and implementation. This is particularly important for those closest to the field where resistance grounded in patriarchal norms may be greatest. Using pairs of male and female staff/volunteers at field level can help to underline

that gender equality work is not just about women, model wider roles for women and women and men working together equitably, and address the security concerns that can constrain women's mobility.[22]

Linking policy and practice: while agencies have gender policies and many have implementation processes in place, the performance in the field is still patchy. This is largely because there is weak buy-in at the field level and in many programs, to the extent that gender is not regarded as central to development work and procedures are not embedded with accountability mechanisms. The AusAID/ Committee for Development Cooperation (CDC) accreditation processes have been important drivers in progress to date in policy and practice and provide an important accountability mechanism to the CDC and within agencies. The focus in recent years on providing evidence of ongoing learnings and improvement, if applied to agency efforts to integrate gender, offers a framework for progressive strengthening of links between practice and policy.

While many agencies review their policies and practice at accreditation to ensure there is an adequate evidence base for their gender work, other steps have not been taken to support consistency and coherence. Regular gender audits and gender budgeting is not widespread across the sector; only a few agencies have undertaken gender audits, and none[23] has systematic gender budgets from which to derive a snapshot of the agency's gender work, with figures for 'women in development work', and activities with a more direct gender focus. Such a basic data set could then inform further policy development.

A gender audit can also assist agencies to determine whether internal responsibility and accountability arrangements for gender mainstreaming are adequate to deliver their policy commitments; and whether there is an adequate system for higher-level strategic reporting on performance that supports the continuous improvement required for accreditation by linking to corporate planning and management arrangements.

Gender policies need to be reflected in performance requirements at individual and organisational levels if agencies are to have a framework and encouragement for delivering on their policy commitments. Performance expectations then need to become part of an organisation's systems and processes in order to close the gap between what agencies say and what they do. '… [O]rganisational insiders do not say, "last year we did accounting, so we don't need to do that any more!" Why should processes of change related to gender be any different? To have an effective organisation, you need to pay attention to accounting all the time. Similarly, you always need to pay attention to gender equity…' (Rao and Stuart 1997: 16).

Training and capacity building: there are a number of initiatives documented in the research which could be adopted more widely. One is the use of online training such as that offered by the World Bank and USAID, which could be supported as a cost-effective approach to entry-level training as part of the induction process. There may be value in developing an approach that is tailored for the Australian sector, referencing local and evolving policy frameworks and accreditation requirements, and reflecting the sector's strong engagement in the Pacific and Asia. There would also be value in some facilitation, to ensure that a critical approach is taken and training material is linked to an agency's policies and programs. ACFID has recently appointed a training coordinator with expertise in online delivery, who could support the progressive development of online resources appropriate for the Australian sector.

This should enable the sector, through ACFID, to focus its direct delivery program on providing more advanced gender training which deals with gender at an institutional level, and explores gender in specific sectors and contexts – for example, constructively addressing gender issues in certain religious contexts, in disasters, with indigenous cultures and the like. Exploring the implications of gender as it intersects with, say, services delivery or disability, is probably better done at a sectoral level with the incorporation of a Train the Trainer element such as adopted by Fred Hollows and TEAR Australia, so that participants are able to carry learning forward within their agencies and into the field.

Overall, the investment in gender training needs to be significantly strengthened, given the capacity development needs, staff movement and attrition, the developing knowledge and evidence base and the dynamic operating environment. Training also needs to be closely coordinated with ongoing sector work and priorities and linked to other gender support architecture, to maximise the value of the training investment and support the conversion of knowledge to action.

Integration of gender in practice would also be supported by identifying available resources, maintaining an updated list of key material, and the critiques of them and an authoritative annotated guide to more specialised sector- and context-specific resources. There is a lot of available material on gender, and for non-specialists, knowing what to use is a key challenge. Staff who are not specialists in gender need some guidance as to what is appropriate or not and in what contexts.

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22 Although women and non-kin men travelling together can lead to other challenges, including managing perceptions about personal integrity and practical requirements such as accommodation. (Goetz 1997)
23 With the exception of IWDA whose program and associated budgets are gender-focused.

Recommendations

This section contains some recommendations, initially for ACFID and its members but which should also be brought to the attention of AusAID and specialist gender support agencies such as IWDA as it is expected that they will have a role to play in their implementation.

1 **Gender audits:** that ACFID encourages the institutionalising of gender audits in agencies, to help them ensure that they work effectively with and benefit both men and women, and challenge gender-based discrimination. This does not mean changing where agencies are focusing, but ensuring that their work, as it progresses the agency's priorities, is informed by gender analysis, addresses gender disadvantage (rather than leaving unaddressed and by implication accepting disadvantage as unproblematic), and promotes women's rights. Gender audits are a tool for promoting effectiveness, efficiency and coherence, helping agencies to identify what works and where there are issues that can be resolved.

2 **Generating knowledge on what works:** it still seems that much of the analysis that informs action is based on limited evidence in which the voices of women who agencies seek to benefit are relatively silent. Further work is required to develop much better barometers of change in which women's voices are central.

Fijian man contributing to action research on 'Making the invisible visible – gender, water, sanitation and hygiene in the Pacific' (Photo: Gabrielle Halcrow, IWDA)

3 **Gender budgeting:** gender budgeting should be an ongoing approach, following gender audits, to ensure that resources are going to address gender issues in line with agency policy. Gender budgets are a tool for agencies to make visible and track how program resources are being used to benefit women and men, contributing to more transparent budgeting and financial monitoring.

4 **Gender training:** that a gender training strategy be developed by ACFID through the Gender Equity Working Group to:
   • Identify basic online gender training modules that all staff can access, particularly new staff or staff in new positions, which cover the basic gender issues (and identify if there would be value in developing tailored materials over time).
   • Encourage agencies to report on gender training undertaken as part of their Board reporting, and accreditation reporting.
   • In consultation with the Universities-ACFID Linkages Network, map available gender training courses for development practitioners and gender components in university courses, as a precursor to assessing whether academic programs focused on international development are providing a sufficient grounding in gender analysis to prepare students to be able to routinely integrate gender into their work in the sector.
   • That specific training modules be prepared for agencies and their partners that focus at the institutional level including gender budgeting; provide context-specific gender training e.g. for religious agencies, or for certain cultural contexts (e.g. Pacific), operational contexts such as emergencies or conflict and post-conflict settings; and for sectors such as WASH, health, education, HIV/AIDS and infrastructure, etc.
   • That Train the Trainer be given priority as an approach, given the few gender training resources in Australia.
   • That additional resources be invested in gender training, by ACFID and individual agencies.

5 **Codes of Conduct:** ACFID develop sector-wide code of behaviour on gender practice for agencies to adopt. This could be used in conjunction with the ACFID Code of Conduct[24].

6 **Resourcing gender focal points:** ACFID should encourage agencies to appoint and resource gender focal points to lead the process of addressing identified gaps and priorities and integrating gender in agencies' development work. Wherever possible, the role should be a dedicated one, rather than responsibilities added to an already full workload.

7 **Institutional support for gender work:** that AusAID invest in strengthening sector-level coordination and development of gender work in the Australian NGO sector, with the Women's Alliances supported by the Office for Women providing one model for consideration.

24 For example, TEAR Australia has a code of practice with respect to gender.

Conclusion

Having a strong gender focus in development work has been a challenge for all development agencies over the past 40 years. By 'strong gender focus' is meant a state whereby the importance of recognising the gender dimension of development work is appreciated, and steps are in place to ensure this is part of an organisation's routine work, that development work achieves equitable outcomes between men and women, and that gender-based discrimination is addressed.

This research finds that for all agencies – bilateral, multilateral, and NGO – progress has been very slow. While the first steps at a policy level started in the mid-1980s, gender and development has been treated as a relatively marginal activity in development policy and practice well into the 2000s. There were early signs of change in some multilateral agencies, namely the World Bank and UNDP, and some bilateral agencies such as NORAD, where the key issues have been identified and reporting procedures have been put in place to address them.

The research found a similar story in Australian NGOs, but that integration of gender by agencies is still at a nascent stage. Comprehensive training in gender analysis and a systematic gender analysis of work is absent from the agencies who participated in the study. There is still a predominant focus on livelihoods, including microfinance, with women as the major beneficiaries, and the belief that this may lead to empowerment outcomes and challenge gender relations. While this is possible, it is not clear that most agencies ensure an enabling environment for empowerment to occur is present.

Agencies generally did not have strategies to work in the private space of the household, which is the primary space for gender discrimination and reproduction of patriarchal norms that can have violent outcomes. Some of the religious agencies were doing interesting work in addressing household gender issues using people's religion as an entry point to talk about intra-household gender relations. Agencies were also beginning to engage with men especially in the areas of gender-based violence and HIV which can lead to action on broader gender relations.

The main area of resistance to change in gender relations came from partners who either saw gender as a western-imposed concept, or cited culture and tradition as barriers which could not or should not be challenged. Where there was respectful dialogue to point out the extent of women's disadvantage, especially in the context of other domains of marginalisation like disability, then change was possible.

A key issue for some agencies was that if the challenges of engaging with partners were to be worked through effectively, the agency in Australia had to have a stronger gender focus in its structure and approaches to its work. Key elements of this include gender audits and agency-wide gender training and follow up to put appropriate policies and codes of behaviour in place. While these initiatives are still evident in only a small number of agencies, it is hoped that they will translate into stronger gender practice in the field.

The research also pointed to a very patchy approach to capacity building on gender among NGOs. Any gender training provided tends to be basic and not regularly programmed. A more systematic approach is required for capacity building within Australian agencies and with partner organisations. Some important ideas to emerge have been to use online resources for the foundational training and more strategic and focussed approaches for whole-of-agency training and training of staff on gender issues within particular contexts. Train the Trainer approaches are an important element especially with partner organisations. In addition, a more comprehensive approach to networking is required across NGOs to enable timely sharing of learnings and good practice. All of this will require investment and stronger coordination through ACFID and the Gender Equity Working Group.

The history of Gender and Development across the development sector as a whole and also within NGOs is that it has occurred in 'fits and starts' and while important initiatives have been put in place over the past thirty years these have not been followed through consistently so that gender is socialised across agencies and therefore becomes 'second nature' in the policies and practices within NGOs. We know what is needed and what works. The focus needs to be on mobilising and sustaining the political will and resourcing to enable knowledge to translate into action.

Participants contributing to research about gender in water, sanitation and hygiene, Timor Leste (Photo: Rosie Wheen, WaterAid)

Photo: Noelene Nabulivou, Women's Action for Change, Fiji.

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Notes

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