



**'EQUAL PARTNERS'?: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THIRD WORLD  
WOMEN WITHIN AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES**

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**Abstract**

This thesis seeks to analyse how Third World women are constructed within two Australian development agencies - AusAID and Community Aid Abroad. Beginning with an overview of Women In Development approaches, it then locates the topic within the 'West and the Rest' discourse and the Western feminist discourse. Women and development policies of the two agencies are deconstructed in order to reveal how they reinforce constructions of Third World women. To further illustrate this, four projects funded by Community Aid Abroad are analysed, along with promotional brochures produced by the agency. This textual analysis demonstrates the need for development agencies to recognise how the complex intersections of power and knowledge within a discourse operate to construct Third World women through the eyes of the West. This thesis seeks to show the relevance of feminism and postmodernism to development agencies and their women and development policies.

**Declaration**

*This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any other university or tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.*

*I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.*

*Julie M. Cutten*

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Julie Cutten  
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## 1. Introduction

This thesis is the product of a number of years of thinking about Women in Development (WID) policies and how Third World women are represented within those policies in Australian development agencies.<sup>1</sup> In 1992, the Australian government's overseas aid department, AusAID (then called AIDAB), produced a statement titled "Women's needs a priority". In this the then Minister for Trade and Overseas Development, John Kerin, spoke about the current review of AIDAB's WID policy. The WID policy recognised the "key role women play in society and the economy ... [and that] ... the development process must include women's needs and preferences if development is to be equitable and sustainable".<sup>2</sup> What was not clear was what a 'priority' actually constituted, who defined women's 'needs', and what was really meant by a 'key role'.

About the same time, Community Aid Abroad (CAA), an Australian non-government aid organisation (NGO), released a brochure promoting its monthly donation program entitled "Will women get your aid?". The brochure highlighted that women in Third World countries often work harder than men for less

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<sup>1</sup>References to development agencies throughout the thesis refer to Western agencies, unless specified as NGOs from developing countries.

<sup>2</sup>AIDAB, "Women's Needs a Priority", Minister for Trade and Overseas Development News Release, 21 July, 1992.

income and that "if you want to help break the cycle of poverty, the participation of women should be of prime importance in the choice of projects you support".<sup>3</sup> Again, women are of 'prime importance', and are seen to be a key component to development overall. These women were presented as a homogenous group, and the emphasis was on what *our* aid could do for them, and how it made *us* feel.

A couple of years later an AIDAB booklet was published called Equal Partners: Gender Awareness and Australian Development Cooperation. The introduction of this booklet referred to the 'central role' that women *must* play for an ecologically sustainable development, and asserted that "seeing women as equal partners and investing in women makes economic sense".<sup>4</sup> The title of the booklet was slightly ambiguous because while it was referring to equal participation for both men and women, the introduction asserts that "equal partnership [for women] in development means equal access to decision-making to shape the development agenda". It is not clear whether 'equal partners' is thus also meant to signify that AIDAB believes that an equal partnership between themselves and the women that they are 'investing in' is possible in the future. This is reinforced by AusAID's primary mission of "Australians building a better world in

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<sup>3</sup>CAA, "Will women get your aid?" AWARE brochure.

<sup>4</sup>AIDAB, Equal Partners: Gender Awareness and Australian Development Cooperation (Canberra: AIDAB, n.d.) 1.

partnership with the people of developing countries".<sup>5</sup>

Referring to WID policies as an 'investment' in Third World women that 'makes economic sense' was also an interesting choice of words. The use of these terms in this, and the previous examples, convinced me that language was an important component in how Third World women were represented in, or constructed by, aid agencies. From this I decided to look further into how WID policies in Australian development agencies have portrayed Third World women, through both the policies themselves, and the promotional material that accompanies them. To narrow the topic down I have chosen to analyse only two Australian development agencies, AusAID and CAA.

Using feminist and postmodern research methods, I want to raise questions about how a Western development agency, located within the dominant discourse of the West, constructs Third World women. The discourse of the West places Third World women in the position of 'Other', as 'different', and Western feminism has been criticised for attempting to locate Third World women as a 'special' issue, or by assuming that *all* women's needs and experiences will be encompassed by those expressed by Western women.<sup>6</sup>

Using deconstructive techniques I will analyse texts

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<sup>5</sup>AIDAB, "Corporate Plan: 1994-1996", 5.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Minh-ha, 1987, Mohanty, 1991 and Parpart, 1993.



produced by the two development agencies and argue that this construction serves to locate Third World women in unequal positions within the dominant discourse. This thesis raises many more questions than it answers, but it does indicate new areas for investigation. It also reveals positive steps that can be taken by Australian development agencies to better recognise the power relations that exist between aid agencies and Third World women using the tools offered by postmodernism and feminism.

This thesis asserts that, without this greater understanding, the language through which Third World women are constructed 'under Western eyes' will continue to produce stereotyped images. It also raises the question of whether images of Third World women can ever be anything but constructions of the West while the inequalities of the relationship between the donor agency and the recipient Third World community remain. To question beyond this goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but the raising of issues is the first step toward opening up the debate.

While questions are also raised about how WID policies and projects are effected in practice, analysis of this would involve interaction with agency field representatives and the 'recipient' communities themselves in order to fully examine both the effects of a project and what a 'successful' project would entail. Merely analysing project evaluations of an agency would be insufficient to provide an in-depth study of

projects. Given the length of this thesis, and the complexities involved in undertaking the above, I have focused on a textual analysis of the policies and projects themselves. However, this did raise some difficulties in the thesis at times when questions were raised that could only be answered by an examination of how the project itself was administered or what the communities themselves thought about the project.

The thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter two briefly outlines the background of Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) theories as they have evolved over the past twenty years. Chapter three discusses key terms and the theoretical issues within which this thesis is located, while chapter four presents the method that I am using. Chapters five and six analyse the WID/GAD policies of AusAID and CAA, and examine in greater detail how Third World women are constructed through four CAA-funded projects in India and Bangladesh, and a number of publications that CAA produces.

N.B. The use of the slash (/) in this thesis is used on the whole in a manner consistent with a number of works drawing from postmodern theories. It is used to signify binary opposites, such as truth/falsity, while at other times is used to indicate how language is constructed. For example, "development/modernisation" signifies that development is constructed in the West as equating to Western modernisation, however this is not necessarily the only interpretation of the word.

In other instances within this thesis the slash is used as an abbreviation of a concept that has previously been referred to in full. For example, "West/Rest discourse", which was previously referred to as "the West and the Rest discourse". "WID/GAD" is used to indicate that the terms WID (Women In Development) and GAD (Gender And Development) are often used by development agencies without any real distinction between them being understood.

## 2. Women and Development - An Overview

### Introduction

In order to analyse the construction of Third World women within development agency policies, a brief look at the different approaches towards women used in development is necessary. It is also important to recognise how those different approaches themselves are constructed, and how projects under these different approaches have failed to validate the experiences and needs of Third World women. Alternative ways of approaching women and development will also be discussed.

### The welfare approach

The history of women in development programs, before it became known as WID (Women In Development), began after World War II. At that time aid was given to war widows specifically so that they could care for their families. This welfare approach was then replicated in programs for Third World countries, with women seen as having only a reproductive role in society - that is, centring around child rearing, feeding the family and maintaining the household. This approach is still practised within some projects. Writes Townsend, "the welfare approach is not dead in development practice, nor is it dead in the development literature. It should be. Women as passive receivers of 'development' are simply a false model

of reality".<sup>7</sup> Gender roles and societal structures fail to be challenged in any way by the welfare approach.

Changes in the approach to women and development came about in the 1970's. A major catalyst was Boserup's groundbreaking work Women's Role in Economic Development, published in 1970.<sup>8</sup> The book argued for the first time that development had had negative effects on women and ignored their role in the 'productive' (as opposed to only their 'reproductive' role) sector of society.<sup>9</sup> Despite limitations,<sup>10</sup> Boserup's work highlighted the issue of women and development as a topic in urgent need of discussion and recognition.

1976-85 was named the United Nations Women's Decade, and International Conferences were held in 1975, 1980, 1985. (The conferences have continued with the latest conference held in 1995). The term 'WID' developed from the Women's Decade and a number of approaches grew from this - approaches that are inter-related, but still need to be seen as separate. All of

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<sup>7</sup>Janet Townsend, "Gender Studies: Whose Agenda?" Beyond the Impasse: New Directions in Development Theory, ed. Frans J. Schuurman (London: Zed, 1993) 171.

<sup>8</sup>Ester Boserup, Woman's Role in Economic Development (New York: St Martins, 1970).

<sup>9</sup>Rosi Braidotti, Ewa Charkiewicz, Sabine Hausler and Saskia Wieringa, Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis, (London: Zed, 1994) 78.

<sup>10</sup>See Lourdes Beneria and Gita Sen, "Class and Gender Inequalities and Women's Role in Economic Development: Boserup Revisited," Signs, 7.2 (1981): 279-98. Also Braidotti, 1994, 79.

the approaches are utilised in some form by agencies today.

#### The equity approach

The first of these is the equity approach. Within this approach women are viewed as active participants in the development process rather than recipients of handouts, and the 'triple role' of women is recognised. By 'triple role' is meant that women work in the *productive* sphere, the *reproductive* sphere, and the *community* sphere.<sup>11</sup> Similar to the roles of many women in Western society, many Third World women work outside of the home, either growing subsistence crops or in a paid capacity, inside the home caring for children, preparing meals and maintaining the home, and finally, they also assume the role of link between household and community, i.e. by ensuring "the provision and maintenance of scarce resources of collective consumption, such as water, health care and education".<sup>12</sup> The objective of the equity approach is to provide access for women to employment and the market place through structural changes in order that they have equal chances as men. It was the first approach to raise the idea of 'integrating' women into development.

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<sup>11</sup>Caroline O.N. Moser, Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training (London: Routledge, 1993) 27.

<sup>12</sup>Moser 34.

### Practical and strategic needs and interests

The concepts 'practical and strategic needs and interests' were introduced by Moser (although originally adapted from Molyneux's model) and are widely used by many developmental theorists. An interest is a 'prioritised concern' that translates into a need, which is in turn defined as 'the means by which concerns are satisfied'.<sup>13</sup> 'Strategic gender needs', as defined by Moser, are "the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in their society ... [while] ... practical gender needs are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in society. Practical gender needs are a response to immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context".<sup>14</sup>

While recognition of the difference between these is important, the complexity of the issues embedded within them raises reservations about possible simplistic appropriations of Moser's concepts by development agencies. As Alsop argues, a failure to take into account the complexities of male/female relations across different social and economic groups when applying practical interventions could, in the long-term, actually undermine women's strategic interests.<sup>15</sup>

What is relevant to the topic of this thesis is that the

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<sup>13</sup>Moser 37.

<sup>14</sup>Moser 40.

<sup>15</sup>Ruth Alsop, "Whose Interests? Problems in Planning for Women's Practical Needs," World Development 21.3 (1993): 367.

complexities of women's lives and needs cannot be simplified, as Moser's practical and strategic needs have the capacity to do. Radcliffe and Westwood argue that this approach "does not provide a theoretical base for understanding women as political subjects and actors".<sup>16</sup> In addition, they suggest that it "has a universalizing quality which is located with a linear view of progress founded upon the post-Enlightenment account of movement towards a goal as part of a grand narrative of rational progress towards a better world".<sup>17</sup> Moser's approach also raises questions of who determines these 'needs' and 'interests' - the tendency may be for development 'experts' to determine these. The latter point will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter that discusses the dominance of Western theories and models, and their resulting influence on the construction of Third World women within Western development agencies.<sup>18</sup>

Using Moser's method, the equity approach addresses strategic needs (i.e. equality with men) only and fails to

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<sup>16</sup>qtd. in Marianne H. Marchand, "Latin American Women speak on development," Feminism/Postmodernism/Development, eds. Marianne Marchand and Jane Parpart (London: Routledge, 1995) 62.

<sup>17</sup>qtd. in Marchand 62.

<sup>18</sup>Wieringa is also critical of the practical and strategic needs approach advocated by Moser, believing that the distinction between the two is theoretically unsound. She also criticises the inflexibility of the theory and its top-down approach. See Saskia Wieringa, "Women's Interests and Empowerment: Gender Planning Reconsidered," Development and Change 25 (1994): 839.

provide any practical gender needs. This does not analyse, however, whose strategic needs are actually being addressed. Criticisms of the equity approach are that<sup>it</sup> is a Western liberal feminist 'solution' to Third World women's 'problems' and that, by focusing on state intervention it advocates a 'top-down' approach. The notion of 'integrating' women into development is criticised as an attempt at 'integration' by 'separation', i.e. by viewing women as a separate entity in order to fully involve them in the development process.<sup>19</sup> Within this approach Third World women are assumed by Western theorists to view equality with men as their main concern, separate from all other aspects of their lives and communities. The needs of 'women' (as understood by Western feminists) have been universalised and applied to Third World women who had little to say in the matter.

#### The anti-poverty approach

The anti-poverty approach emphasises the reduction of income inequality between women and men, but, different to the equality approach, it assumes that lack of development/modernisation is the cause of the inequality, not patriarchal structures.<sup>20</sup> Income generating projects were

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<sup>19</sup>Anne Marie Goetz, "From Feminist Knowledge to Data for Development: The Bureaucratic Management of Information on Women and Development," IDS Bulletin, 25.2 (1994): 32.

<sup>20</sup>Moser 66.



designed to increase women's income and access to resources and credit. Criticisms of these projects are that there is insufficient study of the community and the women's specific situations before projects are implemented. Most importantly they are criticised for not being consultative in their approach and for, in some cases, adding to the burden of work for women.<sup>21</sup>

Buvinic analyses a small selection of WID projects and concludes that project implementation lags behind research and policy achievements in WID programs and that many projects which are designated to be income-generating end up being welfare-oriented. She argues that "social or community development goals take precedence over or replace production concerns when women are involved as project beneficiaries".<sup>22</sup> Buvinic details three explanations for the project misbehaviour: project design; agencies and their effects on project design; and the political economy of women's projects. In brief, she argues that agencies often misjudge income-generating tasks to be more difficult for Third World women, while other tasks in the welfare category (e.g. tasks related to Western women's roles as homemakers, child rearers) are deemed more simple. Another problem is that women

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<sup>21</sup>Moser 69.

<sup>22</sup>Mayra Buvinic, "Projects for Women in the Third World: Explaining their Misbehaviour," World Development 14.5 (1986): 654.

participants having to volunteer their time for programs means that those most in need are generally those with less time to volunteer.

In addition, the historical organisation of agencies makes them more capable of implementing welfare style programs, while the staff that implement women's programs are often women, usually with small budgets and little technical expertise, i.e. these programs are seen by agencies as a low priority. The welfare approach is seen as less of a threat to resources for men and less threatening to the status quo in communities.

What this critique shows is how Third World women in this instance have been constructed as having spare time, being more inclined towards tasks that are 'domestic' (in a Western sense), being passive recipients that are in need of 'hand-outs', and, lastly, as not being able to voice their own needs. Development is equated with Western modernisation, which is represented as the only 'truth'.

#### The efficiency approach

With increasing global recession in the 1980's and no real marked change being seen by previous WID efforts, the efficiency approach was born. This approach reflects "an economic recognition of women as an underutilized 'resource'

for development".<sup>23</sup> Moser cites the efficiency approach as the predominant approach at present by development institutions and writes that "it seeks to meet practical gender needs while relying on all of women's three roles and an elastic concept of women's time. Women are seen primarily in terms of their capacity to compensate for declining social services by extending their work day".<sup>24</sup> Women's participation is viewed as confirming women's equal stance with men within development.<sup>25</sup> The efficiency approach is favoured by the World Bank, the most powerful development agency, as is seen in an article by Barbara Herz, Chief of the World Bank's Women in Development Division. Herz writes that about one-fifth of Bank projects "include some measures directed specifically at women".<sup>26</sup> This indicates that women themselves are rarely the initiators of projects (rather measures are *directed at* them). In addition, this could indicate that four-fifths of projects disregard women completely or, at the very least, take into account the needs of the community (read men). Herz goes on

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<sup>23</sup>Anne Marie Goetz, "Feminism and the claim to know: Contradictions in feminist approaches to women in development," Gender and International Relations, eds. Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland, (Indianapolis: Indiana U.P., 1991) 139.

<sup>24</sup>Moser 70.

<sup>25</sup>Braidotti 81.

<sup>26</sup>Barbara Herz, "Bringing Women into the Economic Mainstream: Guidelines for Policymakers and Development Institutions," Finance and Development, 26 (1989): 22.

to say that, where planning is concerned, the main approach of the World Bank is:

to avoid letting the perfect be the enemy of the good ... Some idea of the specific situation of women in the country concerned (and the underlying explanations) can be developed by gathering basic gender-disaggregated data, reviewing research, and assessing program and project experience. In general, such information can provide a clear enough picture to pave the way for action.<sup>27</sup>

The aim of the World Bank appears to be to get results as quickly as possible, and the people themselves are lost in the process. Herz concludes that "concern for women in development makes sense not simply on equity or political grounds, but for economic reasons ... Evidence suggests that efforts to improve opportunities for women can be cost-effective".<sup>28</sup> This article gives an example of the popularity of the efficiency approach and the persuasiveness of the argument. Herz's arguments attempt to convince the reader that the World Bank approach is a positive one for Third World women by using phrases such as 'empowerment', and 'expanding women's choices'. She writes that the Bank has "intensified its efforts to assist women through its lending operations"<sup>29</sup> and by preparing WID operational guidelines for use by the Bank as well as NGOs, governments and other groups. Such positive statements sit uneasily with the underlying messages

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<sup>27</sup>Herz 23.

<sup>28</sup>Herz 25.

<sup>29</sup>Herz 22.

of efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

The Bank's message of 'efficiency' is for the ears of governments and businesses around the world, who both fund the World Bank and rely on it to maintain the existing economic power structures. As Kardam argues, as far as WID is concerned, the World Bank "has become involved when other donors and recipient governments have shown interest, but it has otherwise considered WID issues only to the extent that they promote the Bank's goals and fit its procedures".<sup>30</sup> From her study of the Bank, she concludes that Bank staff are not comfortable with equity - "efficiency and productivity are seen as value-neutral and objective, equity as value-laden and subjective".<sup>31</sup> The development goal of Western modernisation carries with it the belief that 'objective' data and facts signify the 'truth'. And as Kardam points out, for Bank economists "there is no good theory to explain the link between equity and economic productivity".<sup>32</sup>

The efficiency approach thus constructs Third World women as a homogenous group, ignoring the complexities of their lives and fails to distinguish between women in different communities. The dominance of the West is apparent in that,

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<sup>30</sup>Nuket Kardam, Bringing Women In: Women's Issues in International Development Programs (n.p.: Lynne Reiner, 1991) 115.

<sup>31</sup>Kardam 116.

<sup>32</sup>Kardam 116.

while Third World women are presented in some respects as making choices for themselves, it is only choices that are made available by powerful Western institutions.

#### The empowerment approach

The last approach documented by Moser is the empowerment approach which developed from Third World women's criticisms of the imposition of Westernised WID programs onto the Third World. Goetz writes that the empowerment approach "informs some of the more successful examples of women's development projects, which are based on the grassroots experiences of Third World women and respond to their contextually defined needs".<sup>33</sup> An example of this is the well-known Indian group SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Organisation). Started in 1972 by a group of self-employed women labourers, it began by struggling for higher wages and now provides credit and other important services to women in informal sector employment. SEWA has survived and grown through the support of its members. While providing needs such as resources and credit, SEWA addresses strategic interests that have been identified by the women themselves, i.e. their unequal position to men, the necessity for an organisation that will address women's needs as *they* define them, and the importance of leadership and decision-making being in the hands of the women

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<sup>33</sup>Goetz, 1991, 139.

themselves.

A recognised proponent of the empowerment approach is DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), a network of Third World women. DAWN stresses the importance of women empowering themselves, i.e. by gaining the self-esteem, skills and resources to question inequalities and to demand recognition and representation in society. They see this as leading to more women consulting with development agencies about project implementation and, in turn, agencies consulting with women which will mean further empowerment for those women. Their vision is that "only by sharpening the links between equality, development, and peace, can we show that the 'basic rights' of the poor and the transformation for the institutions that subordinate women are inextricably linked. They can be achieved together through the self-empowerment of women".<sup>34</sup>

DAWN argues that a social/political/economic programme cannot be proposed for women alone, but that rather it should be developed for society from women's perspective.<sup>35</sup> In other words, it is the development model that needs changing. WID proposals to 'integrate women into development' will essentially fail because it is development that is the

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<sup>34</sup>Gita Sen & C.Grown, Development, Crises, and Alternate Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives (New York: Monthly Review, 1987) 82.

<sup>35</sup>Sen 96.

problem.

Hirshman provides a critique of DAWN's vision that argues that their socialist feminist vision does not provide an alternative to the current development paradigm. She concludes that:

Sen and Grown tend to reduce both the complexity of the development process and women's existence by reducing it to the universal category of either *labor*, such as in the procurement of food-fuel-water, or *gender oppression*, symbolized by exclusion, clitoridectomy, restricted mobility, sexual violence and so forth. Consequently, Sen and Grown's 'alternative visions' remain mired in androcentric Western thinking and fail to provide a genuine alternative to mainstream development theory and practice.<sup>36</sup>

This raises a number of issues. Firstly, the issue that DAWN consists, in the main, of women from middle-class, urban backgrounds,<sup>37</sup> many of them Western-educated. Related to this is the question of how much the years of domination of Third World countries by the West have led to the globalisation of Western theories and ideals?<sup>38</sup> Lastly, recognising and

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<sup>36</sup>Mitu Hirshman, "Women and Development: A Critique," Feminism/Postmodernism/Development, eds. Marianne Marchand and Jane Parpart (London: Routledge, 1995) 53.

<sup>37</sup>Braidotti 121.

<sup>38</sup>The question of the possible 'globalisation' of Western theories has been raised, for example it could be argued that feminist theory is applicable to cultures other than the West due to the lengthy and over-riding dominance of the West. Moore, writing about the 'hegemonic masculinity' that is "associated with global capitalism and the domination of the West in economic and political life ... [and] ... which constructs the self-representations of those men who actually rule the world", argues that this masculinity is now global and "has found resonances with a number of local or indigenous  
(continued...)



analysing the position from which people are speaking is important, as well as understanding the power of dominant discourses (in this case that of the West and the Third World). All of these issues will be analysed in greater detail in chapter three.

### Gender and Development

GAD (Gender and Development) is an approach that has grown out of the dialogue between Third World and Western feminists. The use of gender here indicates that the approach is aiming to improve the whole of society, not the position of women in isolation. It is the gender roles that have been ascribed by society for women, rather than biological definitions, that are being examined by GAD. There are many similarities between the empowerment approach and GAD, and the terms are often used by development agencies without any real distinction between them being understood. GAD questions "the underlying assumptions of current social, economic, and political structures ... It leads, inevitably, to a fundamental reexamination of social structures and institutions and, ultimately, to the loss of power of entrenched elites".<sup>39</sup> GAD does not generally challenge the

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<sup>38</sup>(...continued)  
masculinities". Henrietta Moore, A Passion for Difference (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1994) 62-3.

<sup>39</sup>Eva M. Rathgeber "WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in Research and Practice," The Journal of Developing Areas 24 (1990): 495.

goal of modernisation, but Rathgeber believes that it does offer some space for broader interpretations because it "reflects the totality of women's experience and the nature of power relations with other actors in a given social context".<sup>40</sup> As will be seen in chapter five, AusAID and CAA both refer to gender and development in their policies.

### Alternatives

Buvinic believes that a way of circumventing the problems of integration of women into male-based agencies and the problems with women-only agencies - lack of funding, time and skills - is for women-only agencies to expand upon their strengths. She argues that they can "help bring integrated development institutions to women, introduce women to those development institutions, make integrated development agencies aware of women's roles in economic development, and insure that women's concerns remain vital and well-funded agenda items of development agencies".<sup>41</sup> This notion of Western women acting as facilitators raises an interesting possibility that deals partly with the inequalities that exist between Western aid agencies and Third World communities. It suggests a need for 'information carriers' that are better able to pass on the

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<sup>40</sup>Eva M. Rathgeber, "Gender and Development in Action," Feminism/Postmodernism/Development, eds. Marianne Marchand and Jane Parpart (London: Routledge, 1995) 220.

<sup>41</sup>Buvinic 662.

needs of local women in communities to Western agencies. While this does not deal with the inequalities that will remain while the agencies themselves remain, it is one short term possibility. It also raises the question of how much WID can hope to achieve given the continued lack of resources and the small amount of funds allocated to WID projects within the large development agencies. The allocation of resources to WID is not, however, an issue which this thesis is concerned with.

It is concerned with the need for WID/GAD to address the issue of diversity among women, while still trying to formulate a basic approach from which planning can develop. Wieringa advocates that gender planners "should learn to ask new, ethical questions, based on an explicit concern with the relations of oppression which women face, both in terms of gender and of the gendered effects of race, class, ethnicity, age and sexual preference. Women's concerns are incorporated within a network of simultaneous power formations".<sup>42</sup> Class concepts differ markedly in different countries and different communities, and it is an issue for debate as to what a middle-class, educated woman from a Third World country might have in common with a lower-class, rural woman from that same country. Who is speaking for these rural women to development agencies and to governments? Are they speaking for

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<sup>42</sup>Wieringa 842.

themselves? Are they being heard? Or are they being spoken for by middle-class, educated Third World women? (i.e. the women from the DAWN network?). What degree of difference is there between this and being spoken for by Western feminists? This is not to say that middle-class, Western-educated women from Third World countries do not have a commitment to Third World women from poor backgrounds, but that those women themselves from the poorer backgrounds are not the ones speaking.

Braidotti warns against a 'mere reversal of hierarchies' where the poor, Southern women's perspective of development replaces the Western perspective. She writes that "it is imperative that together, women from both North and South, must attack unequal North/South relations from their respective positions. The dominant development paradigm as well as the epistemological assumptions upon which it is based must be challenged from various sides simultaneously, from within the centres of its dispersion and from the so-called margins".<sup>43</sup> How women from North and South can speak, and what has influenced the positions from which they speak, must be analysed further to provide clues as to how such a 'challenge' can take place. Goetz uses DAWN as an example of a positive approach for feminism (Western and Third World), but her example also demonstrates the tendency to 'reverse

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<sup>43</sup>Braidotti 121.

hierarchies'. She writes that DAWN sometimes uncritically assumes "that women can deliver ecologically sound and fair development, with no analysis of the constraints that cramp all development initiatives, or of the power dimensions of change".<sup>44</sup> Or, it could be added, of the constraints that face all women, whether from the Third World or the West. What is required is a recognition of these constraints, without constructing a representation of women as victims.

#### Concluding remarks

Current approaches to women and development have been discussed and critiqued in this chapter, with specific references to how Third World women have been constructed within both WID and GAD theories. Overall, Third World women have been portrayed as a homogenous group, disregarding the diversity among women that results from different experiences of class, race, and gender. Western notions of the needs of women have been imposed on Third World women, raising questions about how the category 'women' itself has been constructed. The debates around this issue will be discussed in detail in chapter three.

The link between development theory itself and gender and development policies has also been raised. Kardam writes that "gender policy and practice have been interpreted, analysed

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<sup>44</sup>Goetz, 1991, 152.

and justified differently, depending on the discourse of development".<sup>45</sup> An example of this was in the 1980's recession when efficiency and productivity were emphasised in the global arena, women's economic contributions and potential for increased productivity were translated into the efficiency approach to WID.

Related to this is how Third World women have been constructed to fit into institutional goals - for example the World Bank's emphasis on women as 'making economic sense' matches its productivity goal. Is it possible that institutions have the capacity to force change? How can the 'challenging' that Braidotti referred to take place when the imbalance of power places the donor institution in such a dominant position?

Goetz contends that the ways in which information is collected and *knowledge is created* is a key issue in changing how institutions administer gender policies. She argues that:

It is a political environment which elicits certain kinds of information upon which to base informed policy-making. The Western WID discourse largely reflects political environments external to developing countries, as well as the political atmosphere internal to the aid community. At play at the broader level are the international relations of dominance and dependence which shape the development field. These can undermine the validity and relevance of WID knowledge of the women it

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<sup>45</sup>Nuket Kardam, "Conditions of Accountability for Gender Policy: The Organizational, Political and Cognitive Contexts," IDS Bulletin 26.3 (1995): 19.

claims to describe and represent.<sup>46</sup>

It is these issues of how knowledge is created and how dominant discourses shape development and relations between the West and the Third World that will be discussed in the next two chapters. Chapter three explores 'the West and the Rest' discourse and the construction of the category 'women' and describes the major terms, informed by postmodernism, used within this thesis.

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<sup>46</sup>Goetz, 1994, 34.

### 3. Discourses - 'The West and the Rest' and Western Feminism

#### Introduction

This chapter provides background to the two key areas that inform this thesis. Firstly, it will analyse the concept of the discourse that positions the West as dominant, and how this has 'shaped' and continues to shape the relationship between Western and Third World countries. Secondly, it will summarise the current debates on subjectivity and the future of feminism itself within the feminist discourse, contributors to which are positioned in many different locations from the Third World and the West. From these discussions this chapter raises questions about the construction of Third World women in order to analyse, in the next two chapters, how the category of Third World women is constructed within WID/GAD policies by development agencies. Alternative concepts are examined in order to offer some practical options to 'transcend' the current debates and dominant discourses.

A number of terms are used within this thesis that can have different meanings depending on the context/theory within which they are used. Following are definitions of terms/concepts, many of which developed out of postmodernism and semiotics, in the context in which they are used here.



Terms

*discourse* - This term is used here to mean a system of representation. Hall's definition is a "group of statements which provide a language for talking about - i.e. a way of representing - a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed".<sup>47</sup> An individual 'inhabits' discursive subjectivities that are represented already in established discourses, for example subjectivities such as class, gender and race.<sup>48</sup>

*language* - As Weedon argues, poststructural theories have led to a rejection of the transparency of language - "language is no longer seen as a transparent medium for the expression of meaning ready-constituted in the world beyond language".<sup>49</sup> From this, text must be viewed as construction rather than as a reflection of reality.

*representation* - "Representations are the products of the social process of representing. The term refers, therefore,

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<sup>47</sup>S.Hall, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power," Formations of Modernity, eds. S.Hall and B.Gieben (Cambridge: Polity, 1991) 291.

<sup>48</sup>Tim O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Saunders, Martin Montgomery, and John Fiske, Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies, 2nd ed., (London: Routledge, 1994) 94

<sup>49</sup>Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) 148.

both to the process and to the product of making signs stand for their meanings ... the process of putting into concrete forms (that is, different signifiers) an abstract ideological concept".<sup>50</sup> As text cannot be seen as reflecting reality, or 'the truth', neither can representations within text be viewed as reality. Representations, for example, of women, are viewed by the reader from within the discursive fields in which they are situated - for instance, to give a stereotypical example, images of poor women with children in India may signify one thing to a white, Western male reader, and another to a feminist academic born in India and now living in the West. Williamson writes, in her analysis of femininity and colonisation in advertisements, "to have something 'different' captive in our [Western] midst reassures us of the liberality of our own system and provides a way of re-presenting real difference in tamed form ... We do not like real Others but need to construct safe ones out of the relics of the Others we have destroyed".<sup>51</sup> Thus images are read by the viewer to signify abstract concepts, depending on the discursive fields in which the viewer is located. Images are also constructed to support the system of power and binary oppositions that upholds the dominant discourse.

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<sup>50</sup>O'Sullivan 265.

<sup>51</sup>Judith Williamson, "Woman is an Island: Femininity and Colonisation," Studies in Entertainment, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1986) 116.

*woman* - feminists have debated the concept of woman, i.e. real women that exist (biologically), and that of Woman, a symbolic position that is set up in opposition to and to support that of Man. Later in the thesis these debates over a unified position of women will be explored. Mary Poovey explains the complexity of the debate: "On the one hand, we need to recognize that 'woman' is currently both a position within a dominant, binary symbolic order and that that position is arbitrarily (and falsely) unified. On the other hand, we need to remember that there are concrete historical women whose differences reveal the inadequacy of this unified category in the present and the past".<sup>52</sup>

*gender* - refers to the social relationship between women and men, and the roles associated with that relationship, in which women have been placed in a subordinate position to men (as opposed to the biological (sexual) differences between women and men).

*difference* - binary oppositions, e.g. light/dark, woman/man, are an integral part of the Western humanist tradition. One is always viewed as dominant, but neither can exist without the characteristics of the other, for example, 'man' with the characteristic of aggressiveness cannot exist without 'woman' being characterised as passive. Thus binary oppositions must be deconstructed to reveal their underlying

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<sup>52</sup>Mary Poovey, "Feminism and Deconstruction," Feminist Studies 14.1 (1988): 62.

symbolism. In Joan Scott's essay on difference and equality, she concludes that we must engage in:

Systematic criticism of the operations of categorical difference, the exposure of the kinds of exclusions and inclusions - the hierarchies - it constructs, and a refusal of their ultimate 'truth'. A refusal, however, not in the name of an equality that implies sameness or identity, but rather ... in the name of an equality that rests on differences - differences that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition.<sup>53</sup>

*deconstruction* - this involves what Scott describes above - the recognition of binary oppositions as constructed for particular purposes and their subsequent reversal and displacement.<sup>54</sup> Deconstruction is often also used to refer to a process of dismantling text to reveal underlying assumptions and interests as well as exposing that which is *not* said within the text.

### The West and the Rest

Western history has seen the construction of a number of oppositional categories, located within the discourse that is referred to by Hall as 'the West and the Rest'<sup>55</sup>. Hall provides four aspects of how the concept of the 'West'

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<sup>53</sup>Joan Scott, "Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism," Conflicts in Feminism, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (New York: Routledge, 1990) 146.

<sup>54</sup>Scott 37.

<sup>55</sup>Hall 276.

operates today. Firstly, it is a tool to think with by enabling the categorisation of societies, i.e. the West, the Rest. Secondly, it is a 'system of representation' that provides a picture of what different societies are like. Thirdly, it helps to explain 'difference' by providing a model of comparison, and fourthly,<sup>56</sup> it provides criteria of evaluation (for example, this is evident in development discourse terminology of 'developed' and 'developing' - aid to the Third World is meant to assist the modernisation process in those countries in order to make them more like, but not the same as, the West). The categories of the 'West' and the 'Rest', known as binary oppositions, support each other. For instance, the West could no longer hold to the image of itself as powerful, educated, etc, if the Rest were not represented as its opposite - powerless, ignorant, etc.

The dominance of the West has been constructed through the global expansion of European countries into countries such as Africa and the Americas. Mohanty writes that the term Third World "does not merely indicate a hierarchical cultural and economic relationship between 'first' and 'third' world countries; it intentionally foregrounds a history of colonization and contemporary relationships of structural

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<sup>56</sup>Hall 277.

dominance between first and Third World peoples".<sup>57</sup>

Discourses are power relations, as can be seen in the 'relationship' between the West and the Rest. Thus, "the question of whether a discourse is true or false is less important than whether it is effective in practice".<sup>58</sup> This raises two issues, that of how important it is to recognise that within discourses those with power represent 'truth', and secondly, that the discourse therefore presents a simplistic representation in which power plays the determining part in what is recognised as 'truth'.

The broad theoretical umbrella of postmodernism has offered new tools to recognise and analyse the discourse of the 'West and the Rest', as well as methods for moving beyond its destructive capabilities. Recognition of how power works through a discourse is the first step. Those placed in a position of superiority through the discourse, i.e. the West, dominate the 'Other', i.e. the Third World, and the latter cannot move beyond being the 'object', nor can it make any claims to 'truth' beyond that which the discourse has already deemed the 'regime of truth'.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Preface in Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism, eds. C.T.Mohanty, A.Russo, and L.Torres (Indianapolis: Indiana U.P., 1991) x.

<sup>58</sup>Hall 295.

<sup>59</sup>Hall 295.

The relationship between 'the West and the Rest' may be complex, but the discourse itself simplifies it such that it becomes destructive by constructing an "over-simplified conception of 'difference'".<sup>60</sup> It does this by dividing the world into two categories - the 'West' and the 'Rest' - thus reducing the West to a group that is unified by its difference from the Rest, and the Rest to a homogenous group that is represented as subordinate to the West. Said raises this in his study of the Orientalism that locates the 'Orient' as subordinate to the West. He writes that "it is the result of cultural hegemony at work"<sup>61</sup> that gives Orientalism durability and strength. In the same vein, Bhabha writes that "the stereotype ... [in colonial discourse] ... is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference ... constitutes a problem for the *representation* of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations".<sup>62</sup>

A person historically placed within the discourse finds

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<sup>60</sup>Hall 280.

<sup>61</sup>Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 1979) 7.

<sup>62</sup>Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question," Screen 24.6 (1983): 27.

it difficult to speak outside of that position, as they speak from the position in which they have been subjectively placed. The question, then, is how people from the West and the Rest can break free of the power of the discourse in which they are positioned? What has taken years to construct must certainly take time to 'deconstruct'. How too can Third World peoples, who have been positioned as ignorant and unable to speak for themselves, speak - are they able to speak from outside this discourse of the superior West? These are questions that I will address further in the chapter.

#### The Construction of the Discourse

In order to dismantle the discourse of 'the West and the Rest', it must first be understood, i.e. its construction and its power. A brief and simplistic look at the past few hundred years indicates how the West reached its current superior status. The expansion of Europe into the Americas and Africa led to the discovery of natural commodities to be plundered and of 'native' peoples that were seen by the Europeans as different in almost every way. The Europeans simultaneously idealised and vilified the 'native' peoples whose countries they were forcibly seizing. The 'natives' were often represented as ignorant, and 'at one with nature', and (sometimes by the same observers) their lifestyles were also represented as something akin to living in paradise. For



example, the women who lived in the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean were often depicted as 'sexually free' (i.e. 'paradise' for men!) and, at the same time, as ignorant and backward.<sup>63</sup>

For Europe, this global expansion, along with growing internal cohesion, helped to "forge that new sense of identity that we call 'the West'".<sup>64</sup> An important component within the discourse is the classification of countries by degree of modernisation - this is particularly relevant in the area of development theory. Spurr notes that this classification "of non-Western peoples according to the paradigm of modernization contains within it, already and as a given, the judgement of their character".<sup>65</sup> The countries deemed lower down the scale of modernisation were, therefore, the benchmark from which the Western countries were able to place themselves at the top of the hierarchy. Most importantly, this discourse continues today, adapting itself in order to maintain power relations in favour of the West. For example, "the intense and localized colonial administration of fifty years ago ... has shifted to a more indirect and global supervision of Third

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<sup>63</sup>See Hall 302.

<sup>64</sup>Hall 289.

<sup>65</sup>David Spurr, The Rhetoric of Empire (Durham: Duke U.P., 1993) 71.

World political and economic development".<sup>66</sup>

A person's position within the discourse affects how they read a particular text. This is particularly relevant to the discussions of publications by CAA in chapter six of this thesis.<sup>67</sup> Spurr's example of Western journalism demonstrates this. He writes that the Western eye "remains mobile and selective, constantly filtering the visible for the *sign*, for those gestures and objects that, when transformed into the verbal or photographic image, can alone have meaning for a Western audience by entering a familiar web of signification".<sup>68</sup> A development agency will probably be just as interested, whether consciously or not, to find that particular image or line of text that will convince the reader to dig deep into their pocket and donate.

This is not to say that some development agencies do not challenge aspects of the dominant discourse. For instance, Community Aid Abroad offers 'change not charity', thus

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<sup>66</sup>Spurr 11. This is exemplified in the power of the World Bank, controlling Third World countries through structural adjustment policies. There are many examples of structural adjustment policies affecting Third World communities through reduced education and health systems, and increasing the workloads of women particularly. See, for example, Women and Adjustment Policies in the Third World, eds. H. Afshar and C. Dennis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992).

<sup>67</sup>As a Western woman, I will be analysing these publications from the position of 'dominance' that this affords and it must be pointed out that this thesis does not deal with how the discourse affects a non-Western person's reading of the text.

<sup>68</sup>Spurr 21.

recognising the need to deconstruct the stereotype of Third World communities as needing 'charity' from Western countries. However, given CAA's location as a Western development agency, is it possible that it can practise development without assuming modernisation to be the primary goal and without legitimating the solutions of Western 'experts'? Do the WID approaches outlined in chapter two provide a challenge to Western dominance? As Parpart and Marchand argue, WID approaches "rarely challenge Northern hegemony, nor have they been able to provide the tools to dismantle patriarchal gender ideologies in the South (and North)".<sup>69</sup> Their point is that, while adoption of the powerful image of the 'poor, Third World Woman' by development agencies is understandable, "this very image reinforces and maintains the discourse of modernity so essential to Northern hegemony and development practices".<sup>70</sup> CAA's claim to help the 'poorest of the poor' also reinforces this discourse - 'poor' being equated with the bottom of the modernisation ladder in the eyes of the Western donor (although this is not to imply that the material existence of many Third World people is extremely poor indeed). How the WID policies of AusAID and CAA reinforce the dominant discourse will be analysed in depth in chapters five and six.

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<sup>69</sup>Jane Parpart and Marianne Marchand, "Exploding the Canon: An Introduction/Conclusion," Feminism / Postmodernism / Development, eds. Marianne Marchand and Jane Parpart (London: Routledge, 1995) 15.

<sup>70</sup>Parpart and Marchand 17.

### Feminism and Postmodernism

Discourses are not closed systems. As Hall writes, "a discourse draws on elements in other discourses, binding them into its own network of meanings".<sup>71</sup> Western feminism, as will be seen, is linked to the discourse of the 'West and the Rest'.

Feminists (both Third World feminists and Western feminists) have begun to discuss and debate how postmodernism can contribute to the question of feminism's relevance for women everywhere around the world. 'Difference,' in the context of differences between Western and Third World women, has raised many issues for feminists, a number of which came to the fore as a consequence of the United Nations Womens' Decade Conferences. Trinh T. Minh-ha hears Western feminists asking 'Why do We have to be concerned with the question of Third World women? After all it is only one issue among many others'. Her response is:

Delete the word Third World and the sentence immediately unveils its value-loaded cliches. Generally speaking, a similar result is obtained through the substitution of words like *racist* for *sexist*, or vice versa, and the established image of the *Third World Woman* in the context of (pseudo-) feminism readily merges with that of the *Native* in the context of (neo-colonialist) anthropology.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Hall 292.

<sup>72</sup>Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Difference: 'A Special Third World Women Issue'," Feminist Review 25 (1987): 11.

A number of Western feminists have joined her to argue that, in many cases, Western feminism has excluded Third World feminism. This has been done in a number of ways. In one respect, Western feminists have been accused of viewing Third World women as victims, as backward and ignorant. Many women in the Third World who have been resisting sexism, racism and colonialism for many years, would not agree with this representation. In another respect, Third World feminists have argued that Western feminists have seen *all* women as being affected by the same issues that affect women in the West. When arguing for the different needs that women have, feminists have been accused of thinking in terms of Western women, and *assuming* that all women have those same needs. In this sense, Third World women have not had a space to speak for themselves - Western women have been speaking too loudly for anyone to hear the voices of women from other countries. Another criticism from Third World feminists is that the category of Third World women, when it is referred to by Western feminists, is represented as a homogenous group, without any acknowledgment or understanding of the myriad of different experiences and needs that exist within that 'category'.

Minh-ha writes that Western feminists, unable to deal initially with the 'difference' that Third World women represented to them, viewed Third World women as 'special', as 'Other'. She writes: "It is, indeed, somehow devious to

think that WOMAN also encompasses the bound-footed Chinese, the genitally mutilated Africans, and the one thousand Indians who committed *suttee* or widow (self-) burning for one royal male. Sister Cinderella's foot is also enviably tiny but never crooked!"<sup>73</sup> In this respect, while Western feminists were generalising about *all* women, they were also unable to completely accept a universal category of 'woman'. This uneasiness is exemplified in the debates below.

Western feminists have approached 'difference' in essentially two ways. Goetz explains these two positions:

One adopts a culturally relativist position. Different female subjectivities are seen to be innate, and to valorize experience to such an extent that different women are entrenched in their particularities. The other, which participates in the post-modernist project of dismantling the claims of western normative universalism, poses as a fundamental problem the epistemological basis upon which feminists justify their project of transforming women's lives in contemporary cultures.<sup>74</sup>

The latter position that Goetz describes deconstructs the whole notion of 'woman' as a unitary concept.

Goetz critiques the two positions outlined above - essentially cultural relativity and postmodernism. The first position, she argues, leads to essentialism and offers no core around which to act politically as feminists: "This respect for diversity also requires that all experiences of oppression

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<sup>73</sup>Minh-ha 17.

<sup>74</sup>Goetz, 1991, 134

be weighted equally. But an equalized notion of oppression leaves us without a way of thinking about justice or politics that can be applied to specific contexts"<sup>75</sup>

Goetz argues that the end result of the second position, that takes its basis from postmodernism, is political paralysis. Her main criticisms are that, firstly, one of the tenets of this approach is that "every account of the world is a construct, a narration, a fiction and hence each account is as worthy or true as its critique,"<sup>76</sup> and secondly, that the deconstruction of 'woman' has caused the identity of woman to dissolve into a 'plurality of differences'.<sup>77</sup>

What is of particular relevance for this thesis from these two positions is the concept of 'location', i.e. one's speaking position. Western feminists at first used the term 'woman' in a universalistic sense, speaking for *all* women and assuming that all women had the same needs and experiences as were being addressed under the banner of Western feminism. With this approach now being criticised by non-Western and Western women, the question of 'who can speak for whom?' is being asked.

Another question is if generalisations are ever relevant

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<sup>75</sup>Goetz, 1991, 145.

<sup>76</sup>Goetz, 1991, 147

<sup>77</sup>Walby also argues that the fragmentation in postmodernism has gone too far. See Walby in Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates, eds. Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips (Cambridge: Polity, 1992).

or whether localised and specific references that situate a text must always be used? Can we ever speak of 'African women', or 'Bangladeshi women', or 'Australian women'? Mohanty argues not against generalisations as such, but for "careful, historically specific generalizations responsive to complex realities".<sup>78</sup> This notion of localised, specific analysis is one that will be raised again when discussing 'alternatives' to approaching/transcending the current situation.

#### Beyond essentialism and postmodernism?

In order to move forward from the current debates about 'woman', particularly those between essentialism and postmodernist perspectives, do we need to "explore the critical insights provided by advocates of each of these perspectives as well as the power relations that inhere in them and to play with their interconnections as well as their points of conflict"?<sup>79</sup> Or does this fail to deal fully with the postmodernist notion of feminism's epistemological failure?

Goetz goes further by arguing that we need to think beyond these tensions. She concludes that we need to:

Engage with difference without diminishing it, we need to insist on a commitment to inclusiveness.

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<sup>78</sup>Mohanty, 1991, 69.

<sup>79</sup>Nancy A. Hewitt, "Compounding Differences," Feminist Studies 18 (1992): 324.



We need to submit to a continual questioning of our own positions and claims. And we need to be guided in our coalitions by the questions of survival which women face at various historical moments according to the meanings that are attached to gender, race, class, sexuality, creed and nation.<sup>80</sup>

We need to be able to listen to another woman's experiences and to be able to accept the 'truth' of this experience, and not to deconstruct an experience to the point that it is no longer a 'lived reality'. Ram also is conscious of the need for 'experience' not to be lost within the realms of feminist postmodernist theorising, in order that the concept of subjectivity not become a "caricature made up of the various speaking, reading and writing 'positions'... that its opponents have made of it".<sup>81</sup>

Use of the term 'inclusiveness' does pose problems for Ang, who argues that inclusion can "only be entertained by those who have the power to include",<sup>82</sup> thus revealing the complexities of different terms, and the power relationships inherent in language and meaning.

### Strategies for the Future

The above discussions do not, however, provide many

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<sup>80</sup>Goetz, 1991, 153.

<sup>81</sup>Kalpana Ram, "Too 'Traditional' Once Again," Australian Feminist Studies 17 (1993): 25.

<sup>82</sup>Ien Ang, "I'm a feminist but... 'Other' women and postnational feminism," Transitions: New Australian Feminism eds. Barbara Caine & Rosemary Pringle (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995) 73.

specific, practical examples of how to transcend the current debates. Goetz does provide a useful analysis of a 'partial' claim to knowledge:

It will be impossible to claim an abstract objectivity for knowledge; each claim will be understood to be embodied, to represent a partial knowing in which the knower consciously takes responsibility for her claims and her enabling practices. Embodied objectivity opens itself up to continual testing in relation to other knowing positions. And it is precisely because of the knower's partiality that she will be able to see with others without claiming to be them, or forcing them to see her way.<sup>83</sup>

Thus we are building up a picture of what position one can speak from, and how to move beyond Western feminism speaking *for* Third World women.

What needs to be questioned is the overwhelming need, particularly by Western feminism, to address whether Third World women can 'speak'. Is this emphasis merely reinforcing the dominance of the West in some respects by implying that Western women are currently able to 'speak' in a non-problematical way? This is not to say that this is the reality for Western women, but that Western women (speaking as they are from a dominant position within the 'West and the Rest' discourse) are problematising Third World women but not themselves. What this thesis is concerned with, however, is the representation of Third World women within development agencies, and thus, the emphasis here is on how Third World

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<sup>83</sup>Goetz, 1991, 151.

women are constructed within the constraints of this particular arena.

One example that is moving in the direction of breaking down the unified category of Third World women is located by Mohanty in her analysis of a number of Western feminist texts. Maria Mies' work The Lace Makers of Narsapur "illustrates how the category of women is constructed in a variety of political contexts that often exist simultaneously and overlaid on top of one another."<sup>84</sup> Mohanty continues that the work also offers positive strategies for the women of Narsapur by not placing the women into the position of victim, and by showing the contradictions inherent in their positions so that those positions can be challenged.

Jane Parpart comes to the same conclusion in her critique of postmodern theory's application to women and development. She urges a "closer, more localized and specific examination of Third World women's *strategies* for survival."<sup>85</sup> (my italics) The use of the term 'strategies', as a term that indicates agency, turns the notion of Third World women as passive victims on its head, although the *implication* still remains of an 'examination' that will be done by a Western person of Third World women's strategies, thus continuing a relationship

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<sup>84</sup>Mohanty, 1991, 65.

<sup>85</sup>Jane L. Parpart, "Who is the 'Other'?: A Postmodern Feminist Critique of Women and Development Theory and Practice," Development and Change 24 (1993): 456.

of inequality.<sup>86</sup>

Frankenberg and Mani discuss the current debates in feminism on subjectivity and argue that it is important to "maintain a sharp analysis of the relationship between subjectivity and power, subjectivity and specific relations of domination and subordination"<sup>87</sup>. They advocate "complex, multiply engaged yet locally focused analyses".<sup>88</sup> Their analysis of the term 'postcolonial' in India, Britain, and the US is an example of a concept's meaning being dependent on the interaction of axes of subordination and domination, at a historically specific and localised site.

Complex subjectivities consist of gender, class, and race intersecting at different points to form ever-changing locations from which people speak. Maynard raises a number of important points that must be taken into account

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<sup>86</sup>Ram's study of Mukkuvar women in an Indian fishing community also raises the need for localised and specific 'representations'. She found that domesticity is organised very differently from that of a western household - in this community the distinction between the domestic and the public is very blurred. There is more symbolic meaning attached to the concept of domesticity and the work done within this sphere is more empowering for women than other work that is available in the public sphere. While such localised examinations seem essential to overcoming generalised views of people and communities, the danger of some voices within communities always remaining dominant must be recognised. See Kalpana Ram, Mukkuvar Women (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991) 227.

<sup>87</sup>Ruth Frankenberg and Lata Mani, "Crosscurrents, Crosstalk: Race, 'Postcoloniality' and the Politics of Location," Cultural Studies 7 (1993): 305.

<sup>88</sup>Frankenberg and Mani 306.

regarding race and gender. One is the material conditions that affect the situations experienced by people, and another is for an end to analysing issues of race and gender as if they were "discrete systems of power".<sup>89</sup>

Thus the main points raised by writers as 'strategies for the future' are the need for localised analyses that engage the complex and ever-changing subjectivities of people, along with a recognition and constant questioning about Western feminism's assumptions and speaking positions.

#### West/Rest and Western Women/Third World Women

Strategies for moving beyond the discourse of the West and the Rest are linked to the feminist debates raised here. The issues are too complex to attempt to right the inequalities by merely including those that were previously excluded (as with the concept of 'integration' by WID). Neither can we attempt a reversal of the discourse by trying to place Third World people in the position of dominance. In some respects, this seems to be the line that Western feminists who apologise for their Western origins take. In this scenario, Ram sees Western feminists as placing themselves in the position of needing only to "provide an admiring audience and derive pleasure from the spectacle of

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<sup>89</sup>Mary Maynard, "'Race', Gender and the Concept of 'Difference' in Feminist Thought," The Dynamics of 'Race' and Gender, eds. Haleh Afshar and Mary Maynard (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994) 21.

Third World Woman-Watching".<sup>90</sup>

As Ram argues with regard to Third World women being represented as endowed with what she calls 'super-agency', "the oscillation to the opposite pole of the binary opposition between victim/agent fails to deconstruct the colonialist problematic".<sup>91</sup> She cites Sunder Rajan's response to this using the example of *sati* in India, in which Sunder Rajan's "emphasis on bringing domination and resistance into the same account instead of viewing them as mutually exclusive is a hallmark of the most fruitful accounts of the colonial subject currently available".<sup>92</sup> In other words, the meaning of 'resistance' and 'domination' depends on the location of the speaker, and a recognition of this, along with an employment of such Western categories in a way that transcends their meaning as binary oppositions, can begin to displace Western definitions of Third World within the dominant discourse.

Stephens also critiques Western feminism's tendency to cling to binary categories in her analysis of Zed Books publications on Third World women. She writes that "the Third World woman is presented as being more 'real' than the Western feminist ... represented as a pure original feminist consciousness, shaped outside historical or cultural

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<sup>90</sup>Kalpana Ram, "'First' and 'Third World' feminisms: a new perspective?," Asian Studies Review 15 (1991): 92.

<sup>91</sup>Ram, 1991, 95.

<sup>92</sup>Ram, 1991, 95.

intervention ... an authentic voice".<sup>93</sup> Third World Women are presented as 'nature' to Western women's 'culture', and therefore in a position of subordination, and yet, similar to Ram's analysis of binary reversal above, Third World Women are positioned as a superior 'authentic voice'. This is another example of the contradictions evident within discourses.

Given the construction of a Western development agency as a powerful financial donor to Third World recipients, is it possible that Third World women can be represented in anything but a subordinate position within them? The links between the debates about Western feminism outlined above and WID/GAD policies (derived from theories constructed in the main part from Western feminism) are such that the discussions and critiques about 'difference' are slowly finding their way into WID/GAD thought, but, as Goetz points out, practice lags far behind research.<sup>94</sup>

Particularly relevant to development agencies is a point raised by Spurr, in reference to how Western journalists believe themselves to be sympathetic to the 'colonised' but continue to reinforce the dominant representations. Spurr writes that "the sympathetic humanitarian eye is no less a product of deeply held colonialist values, and no less authoritative in the mastery of its object, than the surveying

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<sup>93</sup>Julie Stephens, "'Show and Tell': Writing on Third World Women", Arena 88 (1989) 170.

<sup>94</sup>Goetz, 1991, 137.



and policing eye."<sup>95</sup> Development agencies, generally located in a position of sympathy toward Third World communities, thus need to realise that 'doing good' does not make them immune to the workings of the dominant discourse.

Recognition of the effects of colonialism and Western dominance on Third World peoples, as well as the struggle for all peoples to represent themselves outside of the dominant discourses are necessary steps towards alternatives. Alternative discourses between the Third World and the West are a long way from fruition. As Spurr writes, "there is yet to be created either a tradition or even a recognizable style that would reflect an actual dialogue between the West and what is called the Third World".<sup>96</sup>

Spurr gives examples of where 'points of resistance' have already begun to move beyond the dominant discourse. He believes that the terms of the discourse can be reappropriated and turned against their source, citing the example of Sudanese women who, in commenting about the rudeness and body odour of the British, attributed "to the colonizing race the very qualities of barbarism and bodily abjection with which colonial discourse traditionally constitutes the other".<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Spurr 20.

<sup>96</sup>Spurr 200.

<sup>97</sup>Spurr 187.



However, the consequences of Western dominance on the subjectivities of Third World people must always be emphasised. As Ram points out, even the "very terms of resistance to colonialism have been overdetermined by the discursive domination of the West. Nationalist movements have been largely inscribed within Western narratives of modernity, democracy and socialism".<sup>98</sup>

#### Concluding remarks

Postmodernism offers new ways to recognise and deconstruct the dominance of Western feminism and the current debates over feminism's relevance for all women, and from this many new discussions are emerging, as outlined above, offering alternative ways of representing and speaking about women. As many critics of postmodernism point out, there is a detachment that removes postmodern analyses from the reality of material existence that results from the various 'intersections' of race, gender, and class. Like Goetz, Ang calls for the adoption of a politics of 'partiality'. By this she means acceptance that "feminism can never ever be an encompassing political home for all women".<sup>99</sup> Ang argues that feminism must accept its limits as a political project. No doubt the fear of losing strength against patriarchy feeds

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<sup>98</sup>Ram, 1991, 92.

<sup>99</sup>Ang 73.

Western feminists' desire for a universal sisterhood. But by recognising feminism's limits, it does not mean that coalitions cannot still be built and that 'feminism' is no longer a useful theory. It does mean, however, that (using Goetz's politics of 'partiality' which delves into the concept in more depth than Ang) we can know the limits of the position from which we are speaking, the limits of universalisms, and the limits of Western notions of binary oppositions and rigid, uncomplicated subjectivities. As Mohanty writes, "strategic coalitions which construct oppositional political identities for themselves are based on generalization and provisional unities, but the analysis of these group identities cannot be based on universalistic, ahistorical categories".<sup>100</sup> From this knowledge we can recognise the position from which we read, as well as speak, and the constructions of 'Others' that reinforce the dominant discourses.

This chapter has discussed postmodern 'theories' of the position of the West and the Third World within the dominant discourses, along with feminist debates concerned with how 'woman' is constructed. This locates the analyses of CAA and AusAID WID/GAD policies in chapter five. In this next chapter I will discuss the methods used for both chapters five and six.

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<sup>100</sup>Mohanty, 1991, 69.

#### 4. Research Methods

##### Introduction

This chapter presents the methods that I will be using for the following two chapters that, firstly, analyse AusAID and CAA's WID/GAD policies and, secondly, focus on CAA projects and promotional material in more depth.

An awareness of the restrictions and oppressions that women face in the world locates this thesis as feminist. However, I also recognise that many feminisms exist and that for many women, both non-Western and Western, oppression exists in many different forms. A growing number of Third World and Western feminists have seen that postmodernism has something to offer feminism to enable it to move beyond being a Western-dominated theory. However, as discussed in chapter three, there are differing beliefs as to what extent postmodernism can be taken up by feminism, given feminism's highly political stance and history of activism.

Postmodernism offers many new strategies for recognising both how theory, knowledge, and power operate and for analysing their interactions for points of resistance and weakness. Postmodern discourses "seek to distance us from and make us skeptical about beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted within and serve us as legitimation for

contemporary Western culture".<sup>101</sup> The two most important components of postmodern theory used here are the analysis of language (as defined in chapter three), and the questioning of subjectivity. Postmodernism argues that the humanist position of a unified self needs to be replaced with an understanding of the self as capable of holding a number of contradictory positions simultaneously. These positions are produced by the (complex and often in conflict) discursive fields in which we are situated. In addition, postmodernist theory reveals the power relations which determine knowledge and the 'truth'.

What does this thesis hope to achieve?

By analysing the relationship between a Western 'donor' aid organisation and the Third World women 'recipients', I want to raise questions about how the donor/recipient relationship sits within, and is informed by, the discourse of the 'West and the Rest'. For example, can an equal relationship ever exist between the two (i.e. donor and recipient)? I wish to raise the issue of whether an agency has no choice but to speak from the position of 'expert' (and thus speak for the 'recipients') because 'donor' and 'recipient' are located within the dominant discourse in

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<sup>101</sup>Jane Flax "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," Feminism/Postmodernism, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990) 41.

positions of inequality. By operating within the discourse of the 'West and the Rest' is a Western aid agency able to transcend the position of dominance in which it is located?

In particular, I am focusing on Third World women and how they are constructed within a Western donor agency. Since WID became an issue in the 1970's, Western agencies have grappled with ways for Third World women to benefit from development projects. As the criticisms of Third World women became louder (or Westerners became more inclined to listen?), new theories have developed to try to deal with the issue of Third World women. In the last ten years or so, feminist debates about both the WID/GAD approaches and the use of postmodern techniques have raised new issues about women and development. Theories grounded in postmodern techniques are often criticised for their lack of practical use and there have been few practical examples of these techniques being applied successfully to Western development policies or projects.<sup>102</sup> In particular, I found a lack of analyses using postmodern techniques of development agencies promotional brochures. I chose to analyse these as they provide powerful examples of the agency's position - on the one hand providing support for Third World women under the auspices of a WID/GAD policy, while on the other hand wanting to convince Western donors to

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<sup>102</sup>For examples, see Mohanty, 1991, on the representation of third world women in Western feminist texts; Parpart and Marchand, Feminism/Postmodernism/Development, 1995.

donate money to their projects. Is there a chance of WID being used as a ploy (conscious or not) to increase donations?

By using the technique of content analysis to examine the policies and publications of two Australian development agencies, I hope to contribute to the discussion surrounding the construction of Third World women within the West in general, and particularly within the area of development, as well as to begin to open up a discussion of how (if at all) a Western aid agency can move from its present position of reinforcing power inequalities between the West and the Third World.

#### Method

In chapter five I analyse AusAID and CAA's policies on Third World women. This is done by looking at publications that have been put out over the last five years by each agency in relation to WID/GAD. These publications were then analysed using textual analysis, in order to locate the agency's position within the field of WID/GAD. A survey by ACFOA (the Australian NGO organisation) of WID within Australian NGO's was included to locate the policies within the Australian context. The analysis also aimed to expose any inconsistencies or gaps within the policies. Such inconsistencies often reveal a superficial approach to the issues, as well as the agency's position within the discourse of Western dominance. The language used in the policy to

construct the image of Third World women often places Third World women in the position of "Other", and particularly in the position of victim.

The language used within the policies was often vague and contained certain key terms such as 'empowering women' and 'participation' without any real discussion of what these entailed. On the one hand, this indicated the possibility of superficial understanding of what WID/GAD entailed, while on the other hand, it is difficult within the scope of this thesis to follow up in any way how terms like 'participation', and the policies in general, present themselves in practice.

Other questions asked of the publications were who they were written for and whether space was given to communities, and Third World women in particular, to 'speak for themselves' or whether they were always 'talked about'. In general, the publications were written for the Australian public who are concerned with development issues, either as information for donors or as educational resources. The AusAID publications may also be intended for Australian business which is often involved in many of the AusAID development projects overseas. One of AusAID's goals is to encourage greater involvement of Australian business in aid projects, particularly as a means of improving trade relations between Australia and Asia. The CAA GAD policy, it must be noted, is a draft that at this stage was intended for internal use only.

In chapter six I am analysing four projects funded by

CAA in India and Bangladesh, and four years of AWARE bulletins published by CAA to provide information on projects for donors, as well as a number of promotional pamphlets.

The projects are analysed using the same techniques and asking the same questions as the policies analysed in the previous chapter. The projects were not analysed in any way for their 'effects' on the Third World women involved in them, rather the text was taken and analysed as it was presented within reports and recommendations available from CAA. The selection of the projects was determined by the fact that in some cases the information available on projects was limited which narrowed choices considerably and, in the end, the four examples were chosen because they provided differing examples of how Third World women are represented. By differing examples, I mean different to my 'Western' eyes.

The AWARE bulletins are sent out to AWARE members monthly. AWARE is a program in which members donate a set amount of money per month to CAA projects. Forty-eight bulletins were analysed, i.e. four years worth, from 1991-95. Four years was chosen in order to give a broad range of projects over a number of years. The bulletin is a black and white brochure that details a CAA funded project each month. The bulletins are written in order to inform AWARE members of where their donations go, and also to educate them about development in overseas communities. It is the former role that I am concerned with here. AWARE members are generally



middle-class and tertiary-educated people who donate to CAA because they have some knowledge about development issues and wish to contribute to building a just and equal society. Because of this, the AWARE bulletins need to provide a certain level of information for the members to believe that their donations are doing some 'good'. In this respect, the donor plays a powerful role in being in the position to withdraw their financial aid if the bulletins (representing CAA's work and policies) do not meet their 'expectations'. In addition, the front photograph and project title are important components of the brochure, as people often tend to glance at these without finding the time to read the whole thing.

The bulletins were broken down into photographs and text. The number of photos was noted, as was the subject (female, male, community) of the photo and its relevance to the project (as described in the text of the brochure). Other aspects were also examined, e.g. whether the photo showed a person/people in a passive stance or whether they were actively engaged in doing something. The text was analysed for the words used to describe the project and the 'recipient' community, and in particular for how women were 'constructed' by the text. Questions asked were: does the community 'speak for itself' in any way?; is there an effort to redress the inherent inequality between the community and CAA in the text?; who is situated in the position of power within the text? Finally, the questions of who took the photographs and

who wrote the text were considered.

Difficulties encountered were in analysing the difference between passive and active photos and their relevance to the project. The passive photos did not appear as relevant to the project, only because the 'subject/s' were not getting water from a well, or planting trees, or whatever the project is concerned with. In this context, a photograph that depicts 'action' does provide the Western viewer with an alternative to the stereotype of Third World people as 'dependent, helpless victims'. However, this raised the issue of a possible need for Western donors to see images of the 'recipients' working (for their aid money?). Is it that 'under Western eyes', aid project 'recipients' can only move between these two stereotypes? This issue becomes particularly relevant when these photographs are presented within the context of an aid project bulletin that provides the donor with 'proof' that their money will be put to good use. The last section of chapter six analyses three promotional brochures from CAA (promoting the AWARE program to potential donors) by asking the same questions of the text and photographs as were asked of the AWARE bulletins.

In conclusion, and leading onto the next chapter, development is <sup>discussed as</sup> one particular example of how the discourse of the 'West and the Rest' operates. I want to use the debates about how to 'represent difference' and how to move beyond the Western/Third World dichotomy and relate them to how Community

Aid Abroad and AusAID construct Third World women through their policies.

## 5. AusAID and CAA policies on Women and Development

### Introduction

In this chapter I am looking at the WID approaches of two Australian development agencies in greater depth. These are the Australian government's overseas aid department AusAID (formerly AIDAB and ADAB) and the non-governmental organisation, Community Aid Abroad. Both agencies have examined their WID policies in recent years. AusAID employed a WID consultant in 1992 after a major review of project design and implementation was conducted in 1991. As a result of the work by this consultant a revised WID policy was adopted. This year, 1995, Community Aid Abroad (CAA) has produced a draft policy on GAD, an initiative of the Gender Working Group (a group of CAA employees that meets only infrequently). At the time of writing this policy was still in draft form so comments on it are restricted to basic elements that are unlikely to change.

WID/GAD policies from these two agencies will be analysed for their location within the women and development sphere of thought, as discussed in chapter two, and for the construction of Third World women within them. Does the representation of Third World women within the policies reinforce the discourse of the 'West and the Rest', and how does the agency deal with this, if it does at all? Specific project examples from CAA will then be analysed in the next chapter, along with some CAA

promotional material. Regarded as Australia's most progressive development agency, CAA's new GAD draft is the first specific policy on women/gender that the agency has had and it will be interesting to examine the approach that has been taken.

It is important also to state that this chapter is not evaluating how projects have affected the lives of Third World women, nor is it analysing Third World women's responses to policies and projects by these two agencies. I believe that such an analysis can only be done in conjunction with the Third World women who are involved in the projects.

#### AusAID and Women and Development

In 1987 AusAID produced a WID analysis based on a questionnaire distributed to desk officers in the programs division. The findings were as follows:

Projects where WID activities were not included but desk officers would like to have seen WID considered - 17%  
 Projects where WID activities were not included and desk officers didn't see WID as relevant - 45%  
 Projects not considered in terms of WID implementation - 28%  
 Projects with some activities targeted at women - 10%<sup>103</sup>

Of those projects targeted partially at women, they were most often in the areas of health and social welfare. AusAID's policy at the time (1987) was that WID should be considered

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<sup>103</sup>Louise Morauta, Women in Development and ADAB's Bilateral Projects (Canberra: ADAB, 1987) 1.

in the design of the project, only some of which would eventually incorporate activities targeted at women.<sup>104</sup> The female/male ratio of AusAID staff was also assessed and it was found that 49 out of 474 projects had females employed full-time with AusAID funding. Out of those 49, in 30 the proportion was less than 31% and in 16 all the employees were female.<sup>105</sup> The importance of agencies having female staff involved in top-level decision making, as well as project design and implementation is crucial for two reasons. Firstly, the input of women and men into policy decisions should be equal, and secondly, an agency's WID policy that asks for greater female representation in projects is useless if the agency itself has little female representation.

From these statistics, AusAID saw the main constraints being the type of activity that it supports, and factors external to AusAID, such as the views of 'recipient' countries and the conditions in those countries. A large component of its programs deals with trade, equipment supplies, or technical assistance. The survey found little bureaucratic resistance to WID (perhaps because no-one really knew what it entailed), but that overall, WID issues had failed to be raised in any systematic way in the design of projects. In fact, in four cases desk officers decided to add WID

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<sup>104</sup>Morauta 8.

<sup>105</sup>Morauta 13.

activities to some projects as a result of the survey. It was also found that NGO projects handed over to the AusAID's program division were particularly well suited to incorporating WID and the conclusion was drawn that "it may be that ensuring a secure and continuing niche for NGO initiated projects in country programs may be the best way to promote activities targeted on women".<sup>106</sup> Does this indicate that the NGO approach to WID is more progressive than AusAID's? Results of a survey by the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), the umbrella organisation for Australian NGOs, will discuss this later in the chapter. Morauta's use of the word 'niche' here is also an interesting choice. While her evaluation of the survey results can in no way be seen as a reflection of AusAID policy, reference to projects for women as being able to fit into a niche indicates a certain predetermined notion of what WID should consist of.

#### 1991 Review of AusAID's WID policy

In 1991 a review of WID within AusAID was produced, from which a new WID policy and comprehensive plan of action emerged. The plan included a five-year WID strategy for each component of Australia's program, at least one substantial WID initiative for each country program, and active incorporation

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<sup>106</sup>Morauta 16.

of WID into current programming, through institutional strengthening.<sup>107</sup> The revised WID policy states that women are central to economic and social life and must have a full and equal place in development. Failure to do this results in the failure of progress. The three objectives of the policy are:

1. To ensure women have a say in decision-making about overall aid objectives, sectoral emphases and types of activities, so that the aid program is increasingly relevant to women's needs and preferences;
2. To increase women's direct participation in all aid activities, so that Australia's ODA [Overseas Development Agency] is more developmentally effective; and
3. To enhance women's status through initiatives which address the causes of systemic disadvantage and women's specific economic and social needs.<sup>108</sup>

A number of terms can be questioned in these three points. For example, is Australia's ODA to be more developmentally effective for women, or for men and women, i.e. the community? What does 'having a say in decision-making' and 'direct participation' really mean in practice?

A booklet called Equal Partners: Gender Awareness and Australian Development Cooperation has been produced by AusAID and outlines this policy in detail. The booklet also provides a comprehensive account of WID approaches and AusAID's arrival at its current WID policy. It discusses the gender division of labour, women's triple roles in production, reproduction,

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<sup>107</sup>Equal Partners 17.

<sup>108</sup>AIDAB, "Women in Development Policy Statement" (N.p.: AIDAB, 1992) 1.



and community services, and also the ways that women have been overlooked in the development process. It discusses 'mainstreaming' (i.e. moving women's concerns into the mainstream) as a strategy that emerged at the end of the U.N. Decade and identifies two approaches to this strategy. One approach challenges the agenda of the current development planning approach to include women's perspectives and to include women as decision makers (i.e. to begin to change the structures of the whole process of development), while the other aims to bring women into the existing mainstream so that gender issues will be systematically considered across the range of sectors.<sup>109</sup>

The booklet goes on to say that the majority of development agencies, national government authorities, and some NGO's follow the second approach, while the first approach is advocated by a few NGO s and women's groups from developing countries. There is no indication specifically as to which approach AusAID is committed to, but from its stated policy aims one would assume the second approach. The booklet does not analyse in greater depth as to which approach is the more beneficial to Third World women, nor does it discuss any further the approach by organisations such as DAWN that are advocating radical restructuring of the development process from women's perspectives.

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<sup>109</sup>Equal Partners, 13.

The booklet discusses gender analysis and planning but continues to use the term WID to describe its policy. What does this indicate about the content of its policy? AusAID states that:

Ongoing gender awareness and gender analysis training is increasing the commitment and skills of AIDAB staff to apply WID policy to a range of different programming areas. Gender analysis is now integrated into guidelines for country programming. Consultants responsible for implementing Australian aid projects are also increasingly aware of the effects that development activities have on women, and of the need to include women in all aspects of decision-making about aid programming.<sup>110</sup>

AusAID's policy on women in development does not move completely into the GAD approach, as defined by Eva Rathgeber, quoted in chapter two.<sup>111</sup> Of the two 'mainstreaming' approaches described by AusAID above, it is the first option that would fall into the category of GAD, while, as mentioned, I would assume AusAID to fall into the second category.

Questions to ask are whether GAD policies can ever be realised in practice given the existing structure of Western donors and Third World recipients. This is linked to the question of how it is possible to move beyond the 'West and the Rest' discourse. AusAID makes no reference to the power imbalance between Australia and the 'recipient' developing countries and thus fails to address the issues raised by this inequality.

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<sup>110</sup>Equal Partners, 16.

<sup>111</sup>Rathgeber, 1990, 495.

### AusAID's New Directions

AusAID's 1995 paper "New Directions in Australia's Overseas Aid Program" summarises future policy directions:

The importance of integrating the economic, social and ecological dimensions of development ... the fundamental importance of promoting economic growth on the basis of equity and long-term sustainability; maintaining and enhancing ecological systems; improving quality of life through access to health services, family planning, education, a range of basic human rights and participation of all groups in development, with particular emphasis on the role of women in development.<sup>112</sup>

The "New Directions" paper focuses on social development, in particular population, health and education. Population has become a major priority for AusAID. The World Bank has also increased funding in this area and has initiated a Safe Motherhood program that includes family planning. Motivation for the World Bank to focus on this particular area is from its belief that the improvement of mothers' health and education in family planning will expand women's economic opportunities and reduce population growth.<sup>113</sup> While this in itself may very well be a positive step for Third World women, initiatives such as these may end up having negative results, particularly if they are decisions that are made from the top down or are initiatives that focus heavily on the reproductive

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<sup>112</sup>AIDAB, New Directions in Australia's Overseas Aid Program (Canberra: AIDAB, 1995) 10-11.

<sup>113</sup>Mayra Buvinic, "Investing in Poor Women: The Psychology of Donor Support," World Development 17 (1989): 1048.

aspects of women's lives. It is important for the World Bank (and AusAID) to clarify that a hidden agenda of population control for developing countries (that does not fully analyse the underlying causes and issues) is not its main motive.

AusAID's main emphasis, as stated in the introduction of Equal Partners, is that women must play a 'central role' in development in order to promote 'ecologically sustainable development'. This is because women play a 'key role' in society and 'seeing women as equal partners and investing in women makes economic sense'. This final phrase using the terms 'investing' and 'economic sense' is the key to justification of WID for AusAID - it is an economic and efficiency-driven move. AusAID's WID policy recognises the difficulties that Third World women face and identifies the underlying barriers. However, this recognition is prompted by international pressure and United Nations policies. Justification for WID as a measure of efficiency neglects the real issues, as argued in chapter two with regards to the World Bank's approach. It is a thin line between, on the one hand, recognition that women do a lot of the work and are often better organised and better managers than men, and, on the other hand, exploiting that recognition for the benefit of the 'development' process.

In other words, one needs to ask what the agency is wanting to achieve through the development process. Is it responding directly to women's fight for more recognition,

more training, more time-saving devices, and even a new way of looking at development overall, or is it responding to the WID 'movement' and turning it around to suit its own agenda? This is not to say in any way that the WID policy presented by AusAID is not created from a genuine need to help women and to try to recognise their needs, but the question is whether this genuine 'concern', and belief that they are 'doing good', is enough. AusAID's WID policy refers briefly to the survival techniques and strength of Third World women, to the local women's organisations that are pushing for recognition and participation, and also for the right to live their lives as they wish. Any WID policy needs to start here, but it needs substance to make it more than a token gesture.

#### ACFOA Review

The ACFOA review in June 1992 came to some interesting conclusions about WID within Australian NGOs (including CAA). The review was the product of two weeks of consultations between representatives from NGOs and most spokespeople came to the conclusion that evidence that women are directly benefiting from development programs is anecdotal and lacks any real proof to back it up. It was found that "of the organisations interviewed, no agency had conducted a systematic evaluation of its programs with respect to assessing the impact of development assistance on women nor undertaken a thorough analysis of women's participation at

different levels of the project cycle".<sup>114</sup> WID is on the NGO agenda, it was pointed out, but what was lacking was concerted action in order for Third World women to see real changes.

The report advised that "WID is not about aid projects. Rather it is a consideration at every level of the development process that requires structural change, resources, and fundamental changes in our perception of aid".<sup>115</sup> The ACFOA review cited three major barriers to real change within (1) the Third World community; (2) the implementing organisation; and (3) the Australian NGO.

Within the first, project planning processes may often deal with community leaderships in which women have little or no participatory role; there may be time constraints; women may have no spare time to participate; agencies may falsely assume that women will not be affected by the project, i.e. there is not enough research into the roles within that particular community.

Within the implementing organisation (i.e. Australian or other Western NGOs, or NGOs from the 'recipient' country) consideration for women is often left up to the inclinations of NGO staff or individuals on project committees. The report said that even where the partner organisation is staffed in

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<sup>114</sup>ACFOA, Women in Development in Australian NGO Development Assistance Programs, prepared by Ann Kennedy, 1992, 5.

<sup>115</sup>ACFOA 10.

the main by women, they find it difficult to overcome traditional status relationships that reinforce women as subordinate to men.

Within the third area, in Australia, the tokenistic involvement of women in NGOs was referred to, as was the lack of women employed in senior management and board positions, a factor that was also evident within AusAID.

A number of recommendations were formulated as part of the review, forming the basis of a WID Plan of Action for NGO's. These were divided up into: staffing policies within the NGO's; incorporating WID into NGO planning and evaluation, with the emphasis on WID being a shared responsibility by women and men; targeting development assistance, and including an emphasis on reducing domestic labour; providing resources for WID, with a plan to employ a WID coordinator to service the Australian NGO community as well as short-term consultants; establishing ties with women's networks; and monitoring WID performance. While these recommendations are positive steps there is no real discussion of the 'partnership' between the Australian NGOs and existing overseas NGOs despite this being raised as the second barrier.

A concern was raised by the ACFOA review that as NGOs gain broader access to government bilateral funding through AusAID, women will be further marginalised as bilateral projects have to conform to agreements and schedules and tend

to emphasise large projects.<sup>116</sup> This may indicate concern about AusAID's WID policy component by the NGO community and also points to the difficulties that AusAID itself faces in changing their policy emphasis to become more women-oriented.

#### CAA and Women and Development

As a member of ACFOA, Community Aid Abroad's policy on women and development was assessed within ACFOA's 1992 survey. CAA is in the process of formulating a GAD policy, as mentioned previously, but its project policy overall appears to be progressive. Its aim is always to support the most vulnerable groups in developing countries, and thus its projects differ quite markedly from that of AusAID. The experience is that:

Women are the most effective agents for change in the Third World. They are enthusiastic and determined, and are prepared to look beyond the short term. Whatever benefits they gain are usually passed on to their families and, ultimately, their communities and countries.<sup>117</sup>

The language that CAA uses to write about Third World women differs noticeably from that of AusAID. For example, women are 'active agents of change' and CAA provides support for women 'to enable them to gain more control over their own lives'. There is a recognition that Western donor agencies

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<sup>116</sup>ACFOA 9.

<sup>117</sup>CAA, "Third World Women: Sharing the Poverty but not the Power", Issues in Development no.2, n.d., 6.



need to move beyond describing people from Third World countries as active and intelligent people in their own right, rather than as having things 'done to them'. CAA's GAD approach questions current political and economic structures, while AusAID's WID policy, despite the use of the term 'gender', is positioned within the efficiency approach.

However, it could be said that there is a similar tone in AusAID's statement about Third World women making 'economic sense' and CAA's about Third World women as the 'most effective agents for change'. What is presented here is an exceedingly high expectation of Third World women's capabilities. Is it inevitable that a GAD policy represents Third World women in this light? Is this the 'reversal of hierarchies' that Braidotti talked of?

The broad goal of the GAD draft that is being circulated among CAA staff for final comments is:

To promote and support a wider understanding of the dynamics of gender relations and their impact on the daily lives of women and men, through an analysis of gender roles as they relate to broader social, economic, political, ideological and cultural issues, leading to an international program of development initiatives undertaken by CAA that reflects true striving for equality of opportunity and justice.<sup>118</sup>

This policy is supported by the objective that for the design and implementation of every project two issues "form a backdrop to all work undertaken by, or supported by CAA. They

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<sup>118</sup>CAA, "Gender and Development Policy", 4.

are 1) the natural environment and the impact of our work upon it, and 2) gender".<sup>119</sup> These statements deal with the relevance of gender analysis to women and men, and recognise the importance of how gender and development impacts on both the daily lives of people and the broader issues in society. However, it is not absolutely clear how the policy fits into the broader policy of CAA. This may become clearer as CAA continues its policy appraisals.

#### Moving within 'the West and the Rest' discourse

From the history of WID it appears that the main breakdown points are a lack of 'consultation' with Third World women, a lack of recognition of how a relationship between a Western donor and Third World recipients could be positively constructed, and a lack of resources. An overall failure to translate policies into practice is a result of all these points but also the injustice of the entrenched economic and social system that is dominated by the West. The time that it will take to move beyond these unjust systems is also a factor. But what is the issue here is whether change can occur within the current system and, if not, how these systems can be radically altered. Do development agencies accept that there needs to be structural change? Do they recognise the effects of the 'West and Rest' discourse, the power of

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<sup>119</sup>CAA, "Gender and Development Policy", 6.

language, and the overwhelming need for discussion around and understanding of these issues?

Neither AusAID nor CAA discuss in any great detail in their WID/GAD policies the unequal relationship between a Western donor and a recipient Third World community. An agency may be positive about women's central role in development and through its policy women may be systematically integrated into all facets of the development process. But the question remains as to how a 'partnership' can exist within a development process that was conceived under a Western, patriarchal system in which financial power is held by the 'donor'? The concept of the Western donor and the Third World community as the recipient forms a binary relationship that is reinforced by the West/Rest discourse. The donor holds the power through financial, expertise, knowledge, and bureaucratic dominance. Within this discourse, the recipient is placed in the position of helpless victim, needing financial and technological assistance, and being unable to do anything to get out of the situation they got themselves into. The donor is placed in the position of feeling good about donating both money and expertise to 'help the poor'.

The other side of that question is whether the positive changes that some projects bring about for Third World women will generate widespread, long-term change. Are the key terms of 'participation', 'systematically integrated' and

'involvement in decision-making' going to positively change the lives of Third World women? Are these terms again imposed on Third World women by the West? What does 'participation' mean within a policy statement? Does it entail participation in the whole project process from the initial recommendation through to evaluation and beyond? Or does it merely mean, as an example, having women well represented in training programs for leadership? Also, is there any risk of women becoming so 'central' to the development process, and such 'organised managers', that their workload and responsibilities increase while men's roles diminish? This recognition that WID cannot be tacked on to development programs is new for the majority of development agencies and so it is really too soon to assess how the policies translate into practice. However, questions like those above affirm the importance of analysing terms and meanings, and seeing what really goes on in practice.

However, while the language surrounding WID has changed, how much control do Third World women themselves have over individual agency policy directions and projects? While the structure of donor/recipient remains, it is doubtful whether Third World women and their communities will have control over how development affects them.

While the agency policies analysed here show a commitment to the role that women play in development, what about men in Third World communities? The development process has been more favourable in its effects on men due to the fact that for

so long they were the only recipients. But the structure of donor/recipient is fundamentally unequal whether the recipients are predominantly male or predominantly female. Is this 'affirmative action for Third World women' approach going to contribute to the building of an equal and just community?

The GAD approach, however, aims to take the interests and needs of women and men into account. CAA's draft policy explains that gender analysis considers both women and men as well as the relationships between them and their roles in society and recognises that "the needs of women cannot and will not be met by treating their situation in an isolated manner. Women, men and children make up the social fabric, and interventions to that complex social reality must be approached in a suitably holistic fashion".<sup>120</sup> As mentioned, AusAID utilises gender analysis within its WID policy, however, the overall policy does not deal with Third World communities as a whole, nor does it analyse in great depth the gender relationships within those communities. Without a restructuring of societal and economic systems it seems unlikely that both women and men's needs can be addressed by the development process. Is the answer MAD (Men and Development) as Gisela Geisler suggests from her research in Zambia? She writes that this would "critically consider men's

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<sup>120</sup>CAA, "Gender and Development Policy", 2.

often negative effects on household food security and, thus, national economic development".<sup>121</sup> While Geisler's suggestions seems to be half in jest, would this approach be a positive one for Third World communities? A problem with the GAD (and MAD) approach is that women may be at risk of becoming lost again within the development process.

If it were able to be translated into practice, the GAD strategies may be a possible solution. In the short-term it advocates building up women's control over resources, having the means to improve their health and education, and reinforcing positive roles for women, leading in the long-term to Rathgeber's "fundamental reexamination of social structures and institutions and, ultimately, to the loss of power of entrenched elites"<sup>121A</sup>. The needs of men are also assessed under GAD, thus the approach is (theoretically at least) community-building and not gender-divisive. However, neglecting to identify who will be doing the 'reexamining' will do nothing to alter current situations.

This chapter has discussed the policies of AusAID and CAA and placed them in different positions within women and development theory. From this the representation of Third World women that each agency constructs is informed by the WID approach they have adopted to some extent, but mostly by their positions within the 'West and the Rest' discourse.

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<sup>121</sup>Gisela Geisler, "Silences speak louder than Claims," World Development 21 (1993): 1976.

<sup>121A</sup> Rathgeber, 1990, 495.

Himmelstrand believes that the growth of grassroots women's organisations in the Third World means that the time is right for women from both receiver and donor countries to "join together for a real breakthrough for women"<sup>122</sup> in balancing the power inequalities between overdeveloped and underdeveloped communities. The role of Third World women's grassroots organisations is crucial, and CAA supports a number of these organisations.

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<sup>122</sup>Karin Himmelstrand, "Can an Aid Bureaucracy Empower Women?", Women, International Development, and Politics, ed. Kathleen Staudt, Philadelphia: Temple U.P., 1990, 113.

## 6. CAA Projects and Promotional Material

### Introduction

In this chapter I will be focusing on four examples of projects that Community Aid Abroad funds, three in India and one in Bangladesh, along with publications associated with the AWARE programme. The method of inquiry and selection process for these projects and brochures are as described in chapter four.

### CAA and the projects it funds

Projects are identified in a number of ways by CAA - through existing partners and field staff; through Oxfam agencies (CAA is a member of the Oxfam group); through visits by field officers or CAA project staff; or through direct requests by overseas organisations.<sup>123</sup>

Project decisions are made at a number of different levels, depending on the amount of funding required or the sensitivity of issues that the project may raise. Regional committees exist that review country program strategies and decide on larger projects. Decisions on smaller projects are made by field representatives, regional program co-ordinators, or the overseas aid program director. "Assessment of

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<sup>123</sup>Barbara Rugendyke, "Community Aid Abroad," Doing Good: The Australian NGO Community, eds. Laurie Zivetz et al. (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991) 199.



potential projects is often undertaken during field visits, by either field-based staff or staff from the Melbourne office, this increases understanding of the proposed activities and reduces the risks of errors in communication".<sup>124</sup> As this sentence indicates, CAA is aware of the need for communication between itself and the communities where the project will take place. However, this does not eliminate the fact that power lies in the hands of the agency, who will 'assess' the project also to make sure that it will be using funds appropriately. There is nothing inherently wrong with this, as the discourse within which both are operating dictates that the donor agency ensures that its funds are going to the 'most needy'. However, due to the structure of this 'discourse' itself, the unequal relationship between the two is constantly reinforced by such 'assessments'.

Important questions to ask about projects are how Third World women from the local communities are involved in project decision making and implementation, and what the ulterior objective of the program is. One of the project selection criteria for CAA states that "projects should recognise the especially oppressed nature of women in most communities and should ensure that the expected benefits serve to promote, directly or indirectly, the social and economic development

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<sup>124</sup>CAA, Annual Program Review: 1993-1994 (Melbourne: CAA, 1995) 47.

of women, and lead to their gaining equal access to the resources of their community".<sup>125</sup> In theory, project beneficiaries should be involved in all phases of decision making. However, what occurs in practice is something that would require further analysis. So often women have no part in decision making, or may be present but unable to articulate their needs.<sup>126</sup> In order for a gender and development policy to really be effective, resources, time, and commitment are necessary components. CAA's gender and development policy is taking shape slowly but whether the full commitment and resources that are necessary for it to succeed are there is debatable. Commitment requires understanding by all people involved of the complex issues that surround gender and development. An analysis of how projects themselves operate in practice is not what this thesis has set out to do. What this thesis will analyse however is how Third World women are constructed by the projects, and for what purpose. In what way are inequalities reinforced and what is the relationship between CAA and the NGO communities in Third World countries? The commitment and resources of an agency is an important issue because knowledge and understanding of the underlying structures within which it operates is something that the agency must continually analyse and discuss.

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<sup>125</sup>CAA, "Project Selection Criteria", 1.

<sup>126</sup>For discussion of this, see Suzanne Williams, Oxfam Gender Training Manual, 1994.

### Selected CAA projects

The projects to be discussed in this section are from South Asia - three from India and one from Bangladesh.

#### RUCHI, India

The Rural Centre for Human Interests (RUCHI) is an NGO in Himachal Pradesh, a remote state in the foothills of the Himalayas in India. This particular project funds awareness-raising to give women information on issues such as health, the environment, and income generation. This is done through Mahila Mandals (existing women's groups that have been revived through the program), awareness-raising camps, opportunities for the women to visit other NGOs in India, and running training programs to equip women with management and financial skills.

In RUCHI's proposal to CAA for continued funding of this project, they describe the effects it has been having on women: "From a hesitant and uncertain woman she has become a confident woman who is aware of her rights and has a better purchasing power. She has started asking questions and demanding her recognition and her due share".<sup>127</sup> Further on they describe the women's concern to strengthen their political power in order to better influence and implement policies. Further funding is needed, they explain, because

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<sup>127</sup>RUCHI, "Project Proposal for Promotion and Strengthening of Social Action in H.P.", 2.

this is only the beginning and more support is needed by the women in order to strengthen themselves: "She is seeing the dawn. The day has yet to break for her. All this has become possible with the relentless efforts of a team of activists and through their own exposures and educational activities".<sup>128</sup> This last sentence indicates an unequal relationship between the organisation and the women whose day has 'yet to break', although it must be recognised that this is a proposal for funding and RUCHI is therefore keen to promote its own staff and achievements. This indicates the numerous power relations that are being acted out. As Parpart writes, "many of these partnerships [with NGO s] exhibit the same insensitivities as larger mainstream projects".<sup>129</sup> With all of the projects discussed here, the project reports by NGO s are written for the eyes of the donor agency, CAA, and therefore it would be inevitable, given the structures within which they are operating, that in many cases reports are written with a view to attaining further funding. How much this affects the content of the reports cannot, however, be analysed within the scope of this thesis.

RUCHI's long term vision for women's empowerment is impressive - "to ensure women's participation at all levels

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<sup>128</sup>RUCHI, 3.

<sup>129</sup>Jane L. Parpart, "Deconstructing the Development Expert," Feminism/ Postmodernism/ Development, eds. Marianne Marchand & Jane Parpart (London: Routledge, 1995) 231.

of [the] decision making process, be it [on the] political, social, cultural, [or] economic front ... [and to] enable them to fight for their rights and against gender discriminations".<sup>130</sup> Women are seen as being active agents of change. A review of the Women's Empowerment Program run by RUCHI was commissioned by CAA to be carried out by Poornima Chikarmane from SNTD University. Chikarmane observed that, while RUCHI has played a crucial role in supporting women, "the women's empowerment programme has emerged as a component of the overall developmental project/objectives".<sup>131</sup> She suggests that RUCHI "can effectively create a role for women in the alternative development models ... thus breaking the stereotypes [sic] roles of rural women".<sup>132</sup>

An interesting observation by Chikarmane is of RUCHI's strategy of not threatening the 'status quo', based on what she calls their 'professional interventionist ideology' - "this has made it easier for the community to accept RUCHI's work and values without being 'threatened' by an external value system. It has also ultimately resulted in some change in the e[x]isting power structure, by empowering women to be

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<sup>130</sup>RUCHI 4.

<sup>131</sup>Poornima Chikarmane, "Report on the Women's Empowerment Programme", 13. This report is based on discussions over six days with staff and women's groups involved in the Women's Empowerment Programme.

<sup>132</sup>Chikarmane 13.

more vocal against injustices".<sup>133</sup> Chikarmane believes that greater changes could be made by RUCHI being more vocal against unjust societal structures like patriarchy. Advantages to this low key approach may be that an 'external value system' is not imposed on a community where it is inappropriate. Rather values evolve from the ground up (in theory anyway). In practice it would be a hard task to provide information and training for women and not impose any judgements on social and economic structures. Being in the position that they are in, RUCHI cannot hope to remain ideologically non-interventionist, but it is admirable that they recognise the need for the communities themselves to start asking the questions about the injustices that they are facing. Funding for this project has been extended by CAA, and RUCHI has featured heavily in various CAA publications recently. The group's work was the July 1995 AWARE project of the month<sup>134</sup> and was also featured in the cover sheet which is sent out with CAA's quarterly magazine Horizons. The editorial by the Executive Director of CAA, Jeremy Hobbs, in that issue of Horizons discussed his visit to the Women's Empowerment project.<sup>134A</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>Chikarmane 16.

<sup>134</sup>see Appendix for copy of brochure A.

<sup>134A</sup>Horizons 4.1 (1995) 3.

Disha Kendra, India

This project in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra in India is organised by the group Disha Kendra. Training programs are run for local groups with the aim of assisting the development of people's organisations. In this project five groups were assisted through financial support, training and networking. The six month report stated that a female activist was included among the four activists participating from each group, i.e. twenty activists in all, with five of them women. However, a 'shortcoming' was observed in the selection of female activists in that the level of their understanding of the training program was low in comparison with the other, i.e. male, activists. No analysis was given of why this is so. In the proposal for extension of this project, one group was dropped from the five - the one with the greatest membership of women. The reason given was that attendance by this group was irregular and they did not need much support. The latter observation may very well be the case and is a positive sign. However, this report shows a lack of real analysis of women's needs or any deeper study of why they were unable to participate fully in the program. While observation of the project itself would be required to make any further conclusions, it is suggested by the organisation's own report that, while purporting to support women's needs, the organisation does so only at a superficial level in this particular project.

NBJK, India

The Pipawar coal mine, incidentally funded in part by an AusAID grant, has displaced many villages in Bihar, India. The Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendira (NBJK) organisation has been working with rural poor in the area for many years. The project analysed here looks ahead to areas where mining is proposed but not yet commenced in order to inform the villagers in those areas and help them to organise against the proposed mining.

The tenth of thirteen components in the project proposal is to set up a women's committee and organise them "for their effective and active role in social transformation".<sup>135</sup> In most of the other parts of the proposal, however, the villagers are divided into 'family' units. While this means that women are often lost within the project (because family heads are assumed to be male), the project does identify women separately in a few cases. The training programme of fifty participants included ten women. A further analysis of *how* the women participated (i.e. was there space for them to express their views?), and whether their particular needs were taken into account within the structure of the programme, was not investigated further.

In a progress report, a protest by the villagers of Saraiya village was documented, and it was observed that the

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<sup>135</sup>Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendira, "Project Proposal", 9.



women played a main role in the protest. What emerges from the documentation of this project is that the organisation is aware of the needs of women but that gender-disaggregated data <sup>is needed that</sup> would separate the family into women, men, boys and girls and would ensure that no group became lost within all-encompassing terms like 'family' or 'household'. While the project cannot be evaluated in practice, the project proposal and progress report would better indicate that both women and men's needs were being met by further breakdown of, for instance, what 'participation' in training programs, protests, decision making, leadership, etc, actually entailed. Such an analysis is the first step in recognising 'hidden' inequalities that are often left unquestioned by, for example, assumptions that having ten women in a training program means that they are benefiting from that program equally with the male participants.

#### Saptagram, Bangladesh

Saptagram Nari Swanirvar Parishad (known as Saptagram) is an NGO in Bangladesh that began in 1976. Women in Bangladesh are generally not as politically organised or have as many avenues to articulate their needs as women do in India. The achievements of Saptagram are worth documenting here because of this, but also because of the content of the projects.

CAA is currently funding a literacy program run by

Saptagram. The impetus for the literacy program came about in 1983 when a demonstration by landless women and men was staged over low wages. These women and men realised that they must become literate in order to be able to read the amounts they were being paid, and demanded that this education be part of Saptagram's programs<sup>136</sup>. Literacy gives women greater self-esteem, better understanding of their oppression and how to fight it, while also lessening dependency on Saptagram staff (a key result towards which Saptagram is always moving).

Literacy is viewed by Saptagram as a means to an end in fighting women's oppression, and for this reason they have designed literacy material that is relevant to the participants and portrays women in a productive and non-stereotyped manner. The literacy programme aims to provide an education that women will be able to relate to their own lives. For example, in studying the word 'Rights', the student learns how to spell the word, while at the same time learning about their rights as human beings and as women, how to achieve such rights, and how it will help change their lives.

The long term goal of Saptagram is to build the organisational ability of women to participate effectively and on their own terms in the development process. The emphasis

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<sup>136</sup>The origin of the literacy program is always documented by Saptagram when it recounts its history. This places the impetus and initiative for the program firmly in the hands of the women and men themselves, and not the staff of Saptagram.

is on groups gaining skills and knowledge to operate independently. This is an example of a project that is aware of the need for women to take control of their lives, as well as recognising the need for the underlying oppressive structures, in this case the literacy programs originally produced by males, to be transformed.

#### CAA "AWARE" Publications

In an attempt to probe further into the CAA gender and development approach, four years of AWARE Bulletins (sent monthly to AWARE contributors), from July 1991 to July 1995, were analysed by looking at both the text and photographs. Questions asked of the bulletins were how many photos there were, what each photo depicts, and whether the photo relates to the text. In addition, other details about the projects were noted, in particular the language used to describe a project. What became apparent was that a number of projects were focussed solely on women.

The number of photos in the bulletins ranged from one to three. One photo was always on the front, and one or two on the middle spread. Fifty percent of the bulletins featured projects that were specifically targeted at women, i.e. the title specifically said that the project was for women, or women were the major 'beneficiaries'. Eighty percent of the front photo covers included women in the shot, compared to only thirty-six percent that included men. Of the front cover

photos, fifty-five percent featured women only, while only fourteen percent featured men only. A small number of photos were of groups of children or of buildings or land. The photos themselves show a mix of passive shots, i.e. the person is 'posing' for the camera in a passive stance, and active shots, i.e. the person is in the process of doing something. The majority of the photos relate to the project, although it is obviously difficult to relate the passive photographs to the project. Photographs can never be accurate reflections of the *whole* lives of the people photographed, however a constant depiction of communities in passive stances constructs them (in the minds of the majority of Western 'readers') as people who are being 'done to'. Third World women, already assumed to have a passive role in society, are doubly mis-constructed in the mind of the Western reader.

In the four years of AWARE bulletins, half of the projects were specifically targeting women (as determined from the project title and the text), while the other half either targeted the community or men only. The fact that eighty percent of front covers included women in the photographs is representative of the mix of projects in this four year selection. That fifty-five percent of front cover photographs represent women only is also representative of the fact that half the projects target women specifically. In other words, the people depicted in the photographs corresponded to the project participants.

The text varies as to how it describes the projects and the communities. Included were some phrases such as "participate at their own pace on their own terms in the modern economy", "they are encouraged to ..." and "they have learnt it is important to ...". While these are in no way negative, neither do they present an image of people who are independent and knowledgeable. The first phrase raises the issue of modernisation theory in the dominant development discourse. Ram writes that the development model that registers a country's success based on that of Western capitalism ignores other aspects of a community or society. She argues that the democratic political culture that exists in India is "a vital component in any genuine enquiry into the bases for women's and men's status, self-esteem and self-worth [which] do not even begin to show up in the economic comparison of the success stories of Hong Kong, Singapore and Korea".<sup>137</sup> This raises the question of whether the community that CAA talks about really had much of a choice in 'participating in the modern economy'.

Examples exist where Third World women are given a 'voice'. An example is that of Lusey Goro, Co-ordinator of Maprik District Council of Women in Papua New Guinea, who is quoted saying that "all programs led by ESCOW are based on the belief that two things are necessary to permit the full

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<sup>137</sup>Kalpana Ram, "Critical Understandings: The Politics in the Language of Development" Horizons 3.2 (1994) 8.

participation of women in development - firstly, basic needs must be met, and, secondly, all negative social attitudes and actions which work against women must be challenged and changed".<sup>138</sup> This quote does two things - it shows the commitment to and understanding of women that the organisation (ESCOW) has, and it gives one Papua New Guinean woman a chance to speak (although Goro cannot be seen as representative of all women from PNG, and nor can she be seen to represent *all* the women from her community). A description of a project that is written solely by some unidentified person, or by a CAA Program Staff Member does little to dispel the perception that Third World communities, and particularly women, are unable to speak for themselves, and reinforces the power of the donor in the 'partnership'. The majority of the AWARE bulletins are written by unidentified people and contain no quotes from the communities themselves, although there have been small changes to correct this recently.

#### "Women Want Water" Project

An example of the photograph revealing something about the project is the project in Ethiopia titled "Women Want Water".<sup>139</sup> The women's association in the town of Inchine led the push for a committee to address the lack of water. The

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<sup>138</sup>See Appendix for copy of brochure B.

<sup>139</sup>See Appendix for copy of brochure C.

front cover photo for the AWARE bulletin is titled "The Inchine community supplies labour to build their water supply" and shows six men, one of them holding a pipe, and all facing the camera, while the one woman is on her hands and knees facing away from the camera. This shot suggests to the reader that the women in the community do the work while the men stand around (and get all the credit at the same time - the reader is more likely to notice the six men facing the camera than the one woman on her hands and knees). The inside photo shows the Inchine Water Committee - containing six men and one woman. The bulletin devotes a section to the woman on the committee, Fantai Gembremeskai, but the other two photos are likely to shroud the positive story that she has to tell. Having such a photo on the front cover gives it more weight than the other photos, while the text is secondary to the photographs, as visual representation is more likely to represent 'reality' in the reader's mind.

CAA Promotional Material - "Will women get your aid?"

The Gender in Development Group within CAA have generated some acute observations about the language surrounding development and particularly women. A brochure promoting AWARE from a couple of years ago was entitled 'Will women get your aid?',<sup>140</sup> and raised a number of questions about educating

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<sup>140</sup>See Appendix for copy of brochure D.

donors (or prospective donors in this case) about women in development and the language which continues to oppress women. The critique argues that issues and not people need to be targeted, leading to the reversal of images of women as objects, or as people who have things 'done to' <sup>them</sup> as opposed to people who are utilising opportunities<sup>141</sup>.

The "Will women get your aid?" brochure fails to give any real indications of how women are making use of the opportunities made available by CAA projects (the very notion of 'getting aid' reinforces that the women are not part of an equal 'partnership'). This is one example from the brochure:

Hundreds of women in Southern India were victims of extortionate money-lenders who charged crippling interest rates. They asked CAA/Freedom for funds to set up a savings and interest-free loans scheme. Now they are free of the clutches of the money-lenders. Offering loans through an aware project is a good test of involvement - after completion of repayment the people know they have truly earned the benefits.

Words and phrases such as 'victims' and 'free of the clutches of the money-lenders' do not do much to represent the women as having strength and being in charge of their own futures. The overwhelming image of these women remaining from this paragraph is that they are passive and powerless. Even the fact that they asked CAA for funds is constructed to reinforce this image.

While the brochure does aim to raise awareness of the

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<sup>141</sup>CAA Gender in Development Group, "Notes on the brochure 'Will women get your aid?'" , 3.



strengths of the Third World communities CAA works with and to foster notions of equality and partnership (notions which are debatable as previously discussed), the fourth point makes clear what the brochure is aiming to do - raise funds by convincing potential donors to join the AWARE program. This convincing is done by:

The many [Western] people who have visited projects on one of our annual study tours. They have seen our supporters' money at work. Careful monitoring of your donations ensures that the money actually gets there, as well as being put to the very best use.

If this is not enough to convince the reader, a long quote from a current AWARE member, who is also a teacher and a study tour participant, is also included. No quotes from the Third World women themselves are included - it seems that potential donors are more likely to believe 'one of their own', however detached from the actual projects this person may be.

#### Literacy and the Environment brochures<sup>142</sup>

Other more recent Aware promotional brochures deal with the topical issues of literacy, water, and the environment. The literacy brochure again gives no real sense of the project participants as powerful or active. For example, a quote about the effects of illiteracy is from an unidentified and unknown person. The power to change the situation is presented as being all in the hands of the donor - "you can

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<sup>142</sup>See Appendix for copies of these brochures E & F.

help them by giving...". Unfortunately, this may well be what donors need to hear in order to be convinced that their donation will be wisely spent. The two photographs in this brochure are relevant to literacy - the first depicts what is assumed to be participants at a literary class (the picture is cropped to show only two hands), and the second, children in class. The depiction of body parts has long been criticised by feminists for its effect of portraying women as a sum of parts rather than as a whole. In particular, the use of brown, female hands here is a signifier for "other". The use of white hands, despite the fact that many communities participating in the literacy classes would have white skin, would not have signified the same thing to the reader. As Spurr writes, "the body ... is the essential defining characteristic of primitive peoples".<sup>143</sup>

The AWARE brochure that focuses on the environment provides a positive and active account of a forest watch group that aims to prevent further illegal logging in Churchar, India. The group is led by 84 year-old Dalrety. While all three photographs of Dalrety present her in 'passive' stances, she is given space to express her own views on the environment. The emphasis on potential donors joining the "Greening the World Team" may be a move toward changing the unequal recipient/donor relationship. However, while

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<sup>143</sup>Spurr 22.

reference is made to the reducing consumption in the West, it is written in such a way as to shift direct responsibility away from the potential donor. It says that "reducing consumption levels in rich countries is even more critical [than smaller families in the Third World]" - it does not say, "you and I must reduce our consumption levels". In this respect, within the text of the brochure, players on the "Greening Team" are still not placed in equal positions.

In order to improve the publications that CAA produces, the Gender in Development Group offers the suggestion of allocating more time so that wider consultation would be possible. I believe this consultation should aim to promote greater discussion with Third World communities, CAA and Third World NGO staff, and Western donors in order for there to be better understanding of the relationships between them all, and how those relationships should be represented. At present CAA has identified the importance of gender, and actively promotes women's needs through Aware bulletins and promotional brochures, but the time and resources are needed to further analyse gender and develop greater understandings of how portrayals of Third World women through text, photographs and policies can reinforce their position as subordinate. What is needed is an analysis of all publications, a set of informal guidelines for production of publications, education about the importance of photographic and textual representation, and a person whose sole purpose is to

coordinate gender within the project division.

Where to for Western agencies?

The fine line between representing Third World women and marketing of CAA's donor programs also needs to be analysed in more detail by CAA. The Gender in Development Group noted a major criticism of the "Will women get your aid?" brochure in that some people saw it as manipulation of Third World women's positions for marketing purposes. CAA must be careful that Third World women do not become objectified for the sake of the donors. Aihwa Ong writes, "however well-intended in their goal of exposing the oppression of Third World women, feminist scholars have a tendency to proceed by reversal: non-Western women are what we are not".<sup>144</sup> A Western donor agency is in a similar position with regard to presenting Third World women as 'Other' in order to obtain donations. As 'Other' Third World women are able to be 'helped' by Western donors, to be given Western resources and expertise to help them get out of their present situation and move into a modern society more like (but not the same as) the West.

Ong continues that Western feminists need to maintain a respectful distance, "not in order to see ourselves more clearly ..., but to leave open the possibilities for an

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<sup>144</sup>Aihwa Ong, "Colonialism and Modernity: Feminist Representations of Women in Non-Western Societies," Inscriptions 3/4 (1988): 87.

understanding not overly constructed by our own preoccupations".<sup>145</sup> Again, this 'distancing' that Ong advocates for Western feminists can apply to Western donor agencies in some respects. Portrayals of Third World women through agency policies, projects, and brochures are informed by Western preconceived constructions, and such a 'distancing' may also allow self-representation by Third World women to develop. Would this mean policies and brochures written by Third World communities? Would this be a means to unbalancing the current power inequalities that exist between donor/recipient? How much are self-representations by Third World women themselves constructed by the dominance of the West?

These practical questions for the future are what these last two chapters have hoped to reveal or initiate. Deconstruction of the text here has made possible an understanding of the process by which the dominant discourse in which a development agency is positioned constructs and reinforces the construction of Third World women. This quote by Bhabha reinforces the analysis that has been undertaken here:

The point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse. To judge the stereotyped image on the basis of a prior political normativity is to dismiss it, not to displace it,

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<sup>145</sup>Ong 87.

which is only possible by engaging with its *effectivity*; with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both colonizer and colonized).<sup>146</sup>

This analysis of the construction of Third World women has shown that it is not whether an image is deemed positive or negative but the recognition of how that image is constructed that is important. Understanding its construction reveals its 'effectivity' and the complex intersections of power and knowledge in which the discourse is situated.

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<sup>146</sup>Bhabha 18-9.

## 7. Concluding Remarks

What this thesis has set out to do is to problematise the construction of Third World women through Australian aid agencies' WID/GAD policies, their projects, and their promotional material. By problematising how Third World women are represented, I hoped to make more visible how an aid agency itself is situated within the dominant discourse of the West, and thus needs to recognise its part in reinforcing the construction of Third World women as 'Other'. Chapter five also demonstrated the different positions that CAA and AusAID occupy within the development discourse as indicated by their different approaches to women and development.

However, making visible is not the same as destroying or transcending,<sup>147</sup> and therefore there needs to be discussions of alternative strategies that can begin to create new relationships and new ways of communicating that may eventually transcend dominant discourses like that of the 'West and the Rest'.

Both feminism and postmodernism have engaged in debates about a number of issues that have been raised within this thesis. New voices are adding themselves to the discussion, revealing possible new strategies.

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<sup>147</sup>Maynard 19.

The conclusions drawn from analysis of the debates surrounding WID/GAD, 'woman' and feminism in chapters two and three show that the term 'woman' does not need to be abandoned even though it can no longer be used as a unitary category. Neither can the principles of feminism, i.e. Western feminism, be applied indiscriminately to non-Western societies. These terms, constructed as they are through historical change, will remain relevant by changing meaning as history dictates.<sup>148</sup> What is most important is a recognition of how meaning is constructed. As Bhabha writes, "in order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of 'truth' ... only then does it become possible to understand the *productive* ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse".<sup>149</sup> In this thesis textual analysis was employed in order to understand how Third World Women are constructed in two development agencies.

Chapters five and six deconstructed AusAID and CAA WID/GAD policies, and CAA projects and brochures. The meanings drawn from these indicate the extent to which the 'West and the Rest' discourse and Western feminist discourse influences the construction of Third World women here. Even within the policies and brochures of CAA, often referred to as the 'thinking person's' development agency, the agency's

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<sup>148</sup>Maynard 22.

<sup>149</sup>Bhabha 19.



position as donor, and thus holding the power, is reinforced by the construction of 'Third World women' as lacking both agency and voice. This is particularly evident in the promotional brochures that reinforce the donor/recipient relationship in order to convince the potential donor of the 'good' that they will be doing if they donate. CAA locates itself within the GAD approach in that it recognises that WID approaches of 'integration' are not addressing the real issues of injustice in the world. CAA also recognises the effects of aspects of the WID 'efficiency' approach as advocated by the World Bank, in particular the Bank's structural adjustment programs, and challenges this type of approach.

AusAID's position within the development arena is concerned more with Australia's position within the world economy and the region than is CAA's.<sup>150</sup> This emphasis leads it to view Third World women's contribution in an economic sense, as the analysis of its WID policy indicates, placing its strategy for women and development broadly within the 'efficiency' approach.

How important is all this anyway? Do Third World women care about how they are portrayed in Western aid agency policies or brochures? While these are valid questions, they are not the issues that this thesis set out to address. Rather I have tried to show how the portraits of Third World

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<sup>150</sup>AIDAB Corporate Plan: 1994-96, 8-9.

women are constructed, and how they perpetuate the 'West and the Rest' discourse by placing Third World women in a position of subordination. This thesis is not looking at the realities of Third World women's lives, nor is it trying to present some sort of alternative representation of Third World women. I am hoping to reveal new ways to work 'outside' of the dominant discourse in order for more realistic representations to emerge. By analysing how a Western reader constructs 'Third World women' from the texts presented, I have shown how this construction takes place, as well as how it bases itself on something other than the lived experiences of Third World women.

The current debates offered by Third World and Western feminists can help to create new spaces into which development agencies can move. Despite being tied to the inequalities inherent in the donor/recipient relationship, these alternatives can offer new paths for development agencies that may, eventually, <sup>help to</sup> redefine the meaning of 'development' itself.

These alternatives, outlined in chapter three, offer new meanings to terms such as 'coalitions' and 'partiality'. The conclusion from chapter three is that coalitions need to be built between groups - coalitions that are strategic and recognise that the people within them consist of many different voices that do not necessarily agree but are bonded together by a joint need for survival, i.e. survival in order to move towards the future. This does not mean that

everyone's concept of what is required for survival will be the same. The concept of speaking from a position of 'partiality', acknowledges the partial knowledge and the different needs we all have that are constructed from complex interactions of race, class and gender. We can continue to speak from our positions of knowledge as long as we identify both their incompleteness and constant state of movement, as well as that each claim to knowledge is situated and local. As Goetz writes, "this sounds like an impossibly unstable concept of feminist consciousness - as a self-contradictory and continually shifting, re-anchoring identity. But it is a process necessary to the project of reshaping what and how we know".<sup>151</sup>

How do these concepts of coalition and partiality apply to development agencies? What emerges most clearly here is the need for agencies to recognise the complexities of Third World women's lives and to be able to write about Third World women without speaking for them or forcing them to fit into the model already constructed for them by the West. Agencies need to critically examine the images they produce that reinforce the dominant construction of Third World women. There are examples of new approaches by Western and Third World development agencies that question their position within the 'development' arena, and the positions of inequalities

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<sup>151</sup>Goetz, 1991, 151.

that exist within it. Many of these have arisen from the debates emerging from Western and Third World feminism. One example, is found in the need for coalition building for development agencies as expressed in this quote: "In the end, the greatest opportunities for equal partnership may come from relationships in which funding does not play a big part, such as South/North networking for solidarity and lobbying purposes".<sup>152</sup>

I will conclude with a quote from Said on Orientalism that sums up what I have hoped to achieve within this thesis. He writes:

My analysis of the Orientalist text ... places emphasis on the evidence, which is by no means invisible, for such representations as *representations*, not as 'natural' depictions of the Orient ... The things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>Gender Planning in Development Agencies: A report of a workshop held at The Cherwell Centre, Oxford, England in May 1993 (Oxford: Oxfam, 1994) 57.

<sup>153</sup>Said 21.

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#### **OXFAM Publications:**

"Gender in Oxfam's Strategic Plans for Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East: A Survey", January 1994.

"Gender Considerations in Economic Enterprises: Oxfam Workshop, November 1990", Oxfam Discussion Paper no. 2.

**Appendices - pp. 123-128.**

with skilled staff, a resource centre and expertise in a range of technical programs, RUCHI is well placed to share its experience and help to guide the work of emerging groups.

Over the last five years, a network of nine small groups has been established. Monthly meetings are held and RUCHI assists the group-strengthening process through information sharing, planning common projects, working together on issues, resource sharing, training in human resource development, project planning and formulation, accounting etc.

Other assistance for small agencies includes exchange visits with other groups, training workshops and help to obtain other sources of funds. The aim is to have a concerted development effort throughout the villages of Himachal Pradesh.

#### Your Contribution:

Community Aid Abroad funds will cover the modest salaries of the women's program coordinator and four field workers, costs of women's meetings, awareness-raising camps, and costs associated with the promotion of small social action groups.

Your contribution will help to bring appropriate development to the poorest of the poor, especially the women, in a remote part of India.

INHP/RCH/DC

#### Also supported this month Health project of the month

Community Aid Abroad's African project partners often ask for help to get resource materials (written and audio-visual) on a range of topics such as health, gender, environment and literacy. Such resources help the work of local organisations, especially for training and education.

This project will allow Community Aid Abroad to meet specific requests for resource materials.

AFGE/CAA/DA



Women at a meeting in Vohra Dharvillage

Front cover: Members of the VOHRA DHAR village women's group

Photos: Bruce Eady

Text: Bruce Eady (Community Aid Abroad)

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For enquiries about AWARE contributions  
phone our free line 1800 088 110

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ACN 055 208 636

CC29173

**aware program**

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PROJECTS THAT  
TACKLE THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

july  
1995

## Appropriate Development for the Himalayas

### INDIA



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## aware program

MONTHLY PROJECTS THAT TACKLE POVERTY'S  
CAUSES — NOT JUST ITS SYMPTOMS

## this month's project

### Location:

Rajgarh, Himachal Pradesh, India

### Implementing body:

Rural Centre for Human Interests (RUCHI)

### Background:

Himachal Pradesh is one of the most mountainous states of India, covering the foothills of the Himalayas north of Delhi through to some of the high passes bordering Kashmir and Tibet. The majestic beauty of the area belies the harshness of the environment for the many thousands of village people who populate the remote valleys and hillsides. The weather can be extreme in winter and communications and infrastructure are poor, requiring most communities to survive on self-reliance with little outside help.

Despite the hardships, the people of Himachal Pradesh have a strong culture of self-reliance, a sense of community and an affinity with the land.

Non-government development agencies have not grown as rapidly in Himachal Pradesh as in some other parts of India. Those that do exist have to cope with logistical difficulties and isolation.

One of the leading agencies in southern Himachal Pradesh is the Rural Centre for Human Interests (RUCHI), which Community Aid Abroad has been supporting since 1991. They have contacts in dozens of villages around Rajgarh and with other small groups in adjacent districts. They are working principally in the areas of land and water management, appropriate technology, women's development, and strengthening small local organisations.

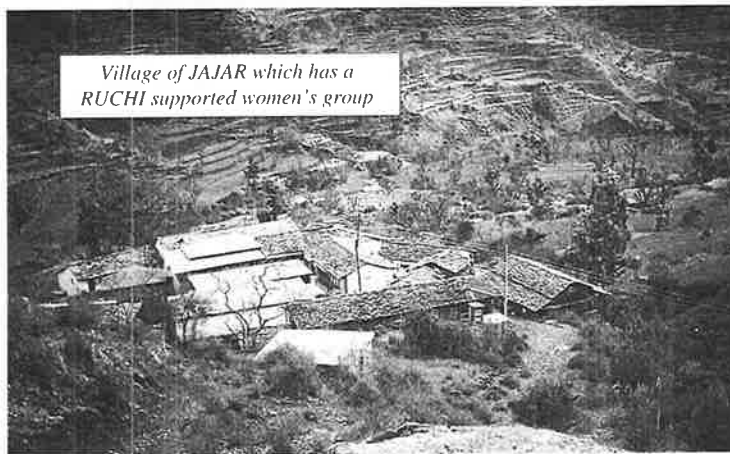
### The Project:

Community Aid Abroad is supporting two major elements of RUCHI's work which it recognises as having high priority.

#### **Support for women**

Firstly, the position of women in rural society in Himachal Pradesh has been carefully analysed by RUCHI. The analysis shows:

- women are often the poorest of the poor and carry a disproportionate workload in everyday life;
- women are often the key to development;
- improving the status and well-being of women will usually lead to overall improvements in village life.



RUCHI has fostered dozens of women's groups with the aid of women field workers – a strong network now exists across the district. Benefits resulting from the formation of the groups include:

- The groups provide a forum for women to meet, discuss issues of mutual interest, practise new skills in a supportive environment and take joint action.
- Literacy classes have been introduced in conjunction with awareness-raising, resulting in greater confidence and knowledge amongst women.
- Practical programs such as small-scale savings and credit, and training in spinning and weaving, have boosted women's incomes.

- Approximately 1,000 women from 50 villages are now involved in these programs.

- Direct action has been taken by some groups on issues such as improving public transport, stopping the brewing of local illegal alcohol, and lobbying to have a female doctor at Rajgarh Hospital.

#### **Ruchi's support for other groups**

The second area of Community Aid Abroad support to RUCHI is their networking with small social action groups around Himachal Pradesh. Being a larger agency

"We are also involved in a Social Action Committee which we set up to look at what the government is doing. If the government says that there's a liquor ban on and it comes off without the women knowing, so women have to mobilize because there are lots of problems when it's off. We need a watchdog committee."

- Lusey Goro

Women have demonstrated that they are now an important organised force in East Sepik Province. In the recent Provincial Government elections ESCOW successfully campaigned to have their president elected. Laura Martin is now Minister for Finance, with considerable influence in the current East Sepik Government.

### The Project

The expansion of ESCOW's activities over recent years led to the need to build up a strong administration and co-ordinating centre in Wewak. Now, however, there is a need to restore a balance to the program and to concentrate again on rural needs.



Donatus Apila, collecting cooking fuel for the Women's Training Centre. Photo: Glenyys Romanes - CAA/Freedom

This project will therefore fund the building of an extension to the well-used Maprik District Women's Training Centre. The extra room will provide space for more "tok ples" literacy classes and a place where teachers can join Donatus Apila for training and materials production.

A thorough review of training materials and programs for rural women in Maprik will also be undertaken in conjunction with them. PAPN/MAP/G

### BONUS aware THOUGHT

"While Europe's eyes are fixed on mighty things,  
The fate of empires and the fall of kings;  
While quacks of State must each produce his plan,  
And even children lisp the Rights of Man;  
Amid this mighty fuss just let me mention,  
The Rights of Woman merit some attention."

Robert Burns,  
address on "The Rights of Woman", November 26, 1792  
... it's been a long struggle ...

Front photo:  
Lusey Goro, Co-ordinator Women's Council,  
printing literacy t-shirts to raise funds.

Photo: Elizabeth Cox.

Registered by Australia Post — Publication Number SAW1068

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aware program

october  
1993

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PROJECTS THAT  
TACKLE THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

## Expansion of Training for Rural Women

Maprik District,  
PAPUA NEW GUINEA



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CAUSES — NOT JUST ITS SYMPTOMS

## this month's project

### Location

Maprik District, the largest of the four districts of East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea.

### Implementing Agency

Maprik District Council of Women, a member of the East Sepik Council of Women (ESCOW).

### Background

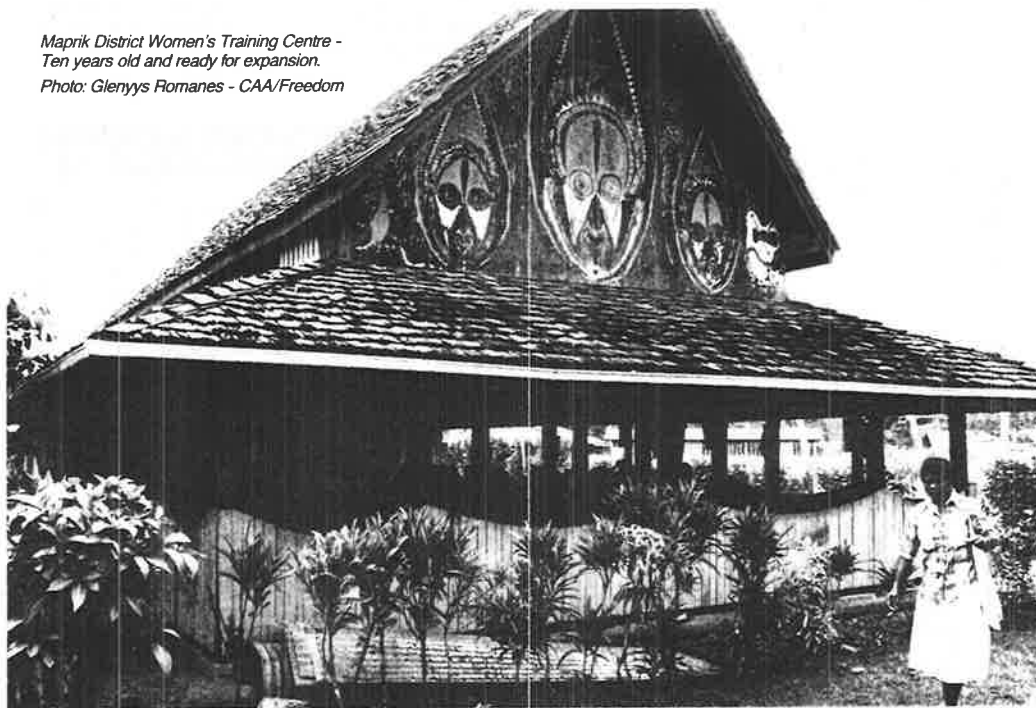
Over the past 17 years, ESCOW has been planning and conducting training programs for rural women to participate in an equal and active way in the nation's development. The organisation has, over this time, been built "from the bottom up". Its foundations are the concerns of local village women's groups and much of its strength lies in the commitment of the women leaders of the four districts, and in the programs conducted out of their local training centres.

*"We train our own trainers; provide our own training materials; plan, conduct, resource and evaluate our own training. All programs led by ESCOW are based on the belief that two things are necessary to permit the full participation of women in development — firstly, basic needs must be met and, secondly, all negative social attitudes and actions which work against women must be challenged and changed."*

*- Lusey Goro, Co-ordinator of  
Maprik District Council of Women*

ESCOW's early focus was on agricultural training and primary health care. Now there are also programs in appropriate technology, handcrafts production, distribution of basic medicines, family planning and a pilot small-scale credit and business development program in Wewak, the provincial centre.

*Maprik District Women's Training Centre -  
Ten years old and ready for expansion.  
Photo: Glenyys Romanes - CAA/Freedom*



Literacy and awareness programs have become very important, given a 75% illiteracy rate. In Maprik District 156 volunteer teachers have been trained to teach in the local languages (tok ples). Materials are created around topics of vital interest to the women e.g. local development issues, family planning, AIDS, logging and the environment.

Sixty five such "tok ples" literacy groups and pre-schools operate in Maprik. They are co-ordinated and supported by Donatus Apila with the aid of his

faithful mountain bike. Donatus is one of a number of young men in Maprik who decided to work with the women's organisations, forming themselves into awareness task forces and attaching themselves to village and district women's centres.

In more recent times ESCOW has grown increasingly confident and through its Social Action Committee, ESCOW has campaigned against corruption in government, the threat of large-scale logging in the province, and for peace and good order.

Maria Strintzos, CAA Program Officer for the Horn of Africa writes:

*Fantai Gembremeskal is no stranger to the hardships endured by women. Nor is she a stranger to social and political injustice.*

*From a very early age, Fantai fought against the brutal Mengistu regime by leading the women's association to reject the regime's policies of ethnic discrimination and deprivation. Instead she worked to create economic and vocational opportunities for women and to make acceptable the right to education and participation in community activities and government.*

*On the issue of water Fantai argues, "... every woman understands the burden of water shortages. A lot of time is lost in water collection. The problem is in our hands. It is up to us to collectively change it". This is exactly what happened. Fantai worked hard with the women's association to bring the problems of water shortages to the attention of the town's administrators and the community at large. Together they collected money and helped to form a Water Committee. Fantai was unanimously voted as the women's representative to the Committee.*

*During my visit to Inchine, Fantai described the project as a rebirth. Everywhere we went in the town, men and women greeted Fantai with familiarity and respect. Even though water is not running through the taps yet, Fantai says, "... since the project started we already feel like we are drinking the water. Can't you see the smiles on our faces?" In meetings men listen to her, and are always alert and ready to accept her views on community matters. Fantai is the voice of the people.*

*A mother of five children, Fantai has personally experienced the tyranny of water collection. Now this chore has passed on to her daughters who will find it easier as a result of the new water system. Before we left Inchine, Fantai motioned me to join her away from the other committee members. She pointed to something close to her heart and then reached into the front of her dress, removing what turned out to be a passport. To acquire such an expensive and prestigious item, Fantai has saved for years to get the passport for her eldest daughter. This is not because she is likely to use it, but if the opportunity arises she wants her to get an education. Without an education, as Fantai says, "... a woman will always be considered blind."*



Photograph: Graham Romanes - CAA

### Your Contribution

The contribution you make to the Inchine Water Supply Project will provide a permanent and clean domestic water supply to the entire Inchine community. CAA will fund the purchase of materials (pipes, pumps, etc.) and will pay for the technical labour needed.

By supporting this project you will be rewarding the initiatives and effort of the community and supporting the principle of community involvement and ownership. For women in Inchine, having water so much closer to home will reduce the hazards and burden of water collection; it will also improve their own health and that of their children and the community in general.

AFET/OSH/D

### Project Report

*Aware contributions funded a community health project in April 1992, through the Guatemalan Association for Education and Development. The project aimed to work with 267 displaced people who had fled to Suchitepequez on the Pacific Coast because of the long and violent civil war.*

*A recent report of the project gives an honest assessment of several areas of difficulties. These included a "handout mentality" at some clinics, distrust and fear amongst the population, and extreme dispersal of the displaced.*

*Advances included the training of health promoters and the supply of community medical equipment. Meetings of local midwives have been held to share information with the new health promoters. The local population - mainly poor landless peasant farmers - have become involved.*

*The report indicates that the project has laid the groundwork for further development of traditional medicine, particularly in tackling mental health problems. At a time when there are few basic education or health services for the poor in Guatemala, this project offers hope for the future.*

### BONUS aware THOUGHT

*"Two-thirds of the world's households use a water source outside the home - and the water haulers are invariably women. A person needs 5 litres a day for drinking and cooking, 25 more to stay clean. The most a woman can carry in comfort is 15 litres".*  
— From New Internationalist Magazine No. 207

*Front photo:  
The Inchine community supplies labour to build their water supply.*

*Photograph: Oromo Self Help Organisation*

Registered by Australia Post — Publication Number SAW1068

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PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE PROJECTS THAT  
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april  
1994

## Women Want Water (Water Supply Project)

### Inchine - Oromo Region, ETHIOPIA



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MONTHLY PROJECTS THAT TACKLE POVERTY'S  
CAUSES — NOT JUST ITS SYMPTOMS

## this month's project

### The Place

Inchine is a small but bustling town with a population of 7,000 people, located 78 kms north-west of Addis Ababa, in the Ethiopian region of Oromia.

### The People

The women of Inchine and their families.

### Background

In many parts of Ethiopia, the scarcity of clean drinking water is a greater threat to the survival of the communities than any food shortages. Traditional water sources such as springs, rivers and wells have been depleted by recurrent droughts and the neglect of the Mengistu regime.

With no water available to them, some families are being forced to migrate whilst women, traditionally responsible for water collection, are required to spend several hours a day searching for water in increasingly distant regions. In Inchine, women travel for 3-4 hours a day, sometimes twice a day, through rugged and slippery terrain.

The trek is arduous and back-breaking for the women who carry clay pots weighing up to 30 kgs strapped to their backs. In the evenings the search becomes more dangerous with women frequently falling down steep crevices. Attacks by wild animals are common. The water sources that exist are often contaminated by cholera and dysentery and unfit for human consumption. The health of all women and the communities in general is getting worse with the water scarcity coming on top of an already inadequate diet.

The people of Inchine are no longer prepared to accept this damage to the well-being of the community. Led by the women's association, they called a meeting of all the townspeople. Collectively they decided on a plan of action which included electing a Water Committee to work on ways to address the problem and to raise funds for the eventual development of a water system.

Recognising that the community lacked the appropriate technical skills to design a town water supply, the Water Committee literally marched into Addis Ababa to seek out organisations that could assist them. Eventually the Committee met with the Oromo Self Help Organisation.

### The Implementing Body

The Oromo Self Help Organisation (OSHO) is an Ethiopian national non-government organisation concerned with the development of Oromo communities. Following discussions with the Inchine Water Committee and numerous field visits, OSHO agreed to raise funds and help to install a water supply system.



*The Inchine Water Committee.  
Photograph: Graham Romanes — CAA*

### The Project

A feasibility study of Inchine by OSHO and Africare (an African agency specialising in water resource development) helped to determine the most appropriate and permanent supply for the town. It was decided to drill two boreholes to pump water to an elevated 50 cubic metre capacity reservoir. From the reservoir the water is fed through a network of pipes to 8 communal water points.

The community chose the locations of these points according to need and closeness to residents' quarters. Each point will serve 750 people. It is estimated that if people consume 25 litres per day, the new water system will ensure the town is totally self-sufficient in water for the next 25 years.

Community labourers have assisted in the construction of the new system whilst the overall management of the water system rests with the community. Inchine residents

have been selected by the community for training in the operation and maintenance of the water points and collection of user tariffs for spare parts and running costs.

### Community Participation

The will and commitment of the community to identify and carry through an idea to improve their lives is pivotal to the success of the project. From the outset the community has worked together and actively participated in defining the problem, deciding on sites for water points, offering labour in the construction phase and selecting trainees to maintain and manage the sites. The Water Committee's efforts to collect funds from the community itself, whilst not sufficient to cover the costs of the project, shows how important community organisations are in getting things done and addressing the issues that affect their lives.

## WHAT MAKES AWARE SO SPECIAL?

### ■ Direct Partnership

Most projects are implemented directly with our partners in the villages. We don't have to pass funds through any international headquarters.

### ■ Evaluation

Because we are so close to our project partners, we can evaluate project successes and failures with them in great depth. After almost 40 years, we have developed vast experience. The quality and effectiveness of our projects is extraordinary.

### ■ Focus

Our evaluation has highlighted the groups of people most likely to miss out on conventional development — women and landless tribals for example. So we carefully select aid projects that will focus benefits on these groups in the villages, the "poorest of the poor".

### ■ People Power

CAA/Freedom's strength is its astonishing depth of volunteer support in Australia. Thousands of hours of time and effort are put in by CAA/Freedom Group and Committee members, because they know CAA/Freedom projects do work.

### ■ See-For-Yourself Tours

Each year around fifty volunteers pay for a place on a CAA/Freedom Study Tour to India or Central America for example. They see for themselves the courage and skill needed by our project partners to overcome the enormous obstacles in the path of justice for the poor. They see the need, they see the solutions, they see that the aid really gets there.

Monthly **AWARE** projects tackle the causes of poverty.

- Help fishing families in India regain their right of access to rivers.
- Provide women's literacy training in Bangladesh.
- Support Primary Health Care in Thailand.

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### Raising awareness. Raising money.

CAA/Freedom now raises around eighteen million dollars each year for a program that includes awareness raising projects, women's projects, health projects, production projects, education projects, employment projects, community development projects, literacy and motivational projects.

CAA/Freedom is a genuine Australian community-based organisation and is funded and governed by volunteer supporters.

CAA/Freedom believes that until we understand the problems of the poor world there can be no real peace in our world.

That until we limit what we consume there will be no real justice in this world.

That there can be equal opportunity. For all people. And that we must work for it before it is too late.

### HOW TO JOIN AWARE TODAY!

1. Complete the tear-off authorisation form.
2. If you have authorised a monthly debit from your bank, building society or credit union account, please enclose a blank cheque or deposit slip marked CANCELLED. It will be used to verify your bank account number.
3. Post the form to Reply Paid 5529, AWARE Program, 7 Hutt Street, ADELAIDE 5000. (If you prefer you can fax your form to Fax No. (08) 232 1887.)

*The Community Aid Abroad guarantee to every AWARE member:*

*You maintain complete control of your donation. If you ever wish to cancel or alter your gift, simply phone Brian Hobbs on the direct AWARE line on 1800 088 110 (free call). You will receive a monthly project bulletin and an annual statement of your tax-deductible donations. Thank you very much for joining AWARE.*

## AWARENESS FOR CHANGE

Many of the problems of the poor world can be traced to the excesses of the rich world. That's a fact many in the rich world would rather not face. That's a fact we want to bring home to many Australians.

Through direct communication with the 180 CAA/Freedom volunteer groups in Australia. Through information on aid, development and relationships between rich and poor.

Because as long as the rich remain ignorant, aid will be minimal and misdirected, and the efforts of people to improve themselves counteracted and rendered useless.

And the poor will remain misunderstood.

And mistreated.

## AWARENESS FOR JUSTICE

In Australia as well as internationally. Because racism and poverty are not obscurities that occur only overseas, we're assisting in a number of Aboriginal causes.

And we're campaigning to stop the practices of transnational corporations which exploit the poor or ruin our global environment.

And we're highlighting the deficiencies in the Australian Government's aid program.

And more.

Because, finally, that is the reason for CAA/Freedom's being.

Justice.

Economic Justice. Social Justice.

For all people.

A partnership with the poor.

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# Will women get your aid?

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JOINT ACTION AGAINST POVERTY AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE





Women in poor countries often work twice as many hours as men, for one-tenth of the income. They produce half the food, but often eat last and less than the rest of the family. Women own only 1% of the world's property. So if you want to help break the cycle of poverty, the **participation of women should be of prime importance** in the choice of projects you support. You will become a partner with them by joining Community Aid Abroad/Freedom From Hunger's **AWARE** Program. Instead of giving charity handouts that treat

symptoms but ignore causes, **AWARE** lets you take your concern to the heart of the poverty problem.

#### HOW DOES AWARE WORK?

When you join **AWARE**, you give at least \$10 (tax deductible) each month. Through Community Aid Abroad/Freedom From Hunger's world-wide network, a special project is selected that is in urgent need of financial support. The projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific are community-based self-help projects that tackle the CAUSES OF POVERTY. Every month you get details of the selected project. So you learn more and more about world poverty while you help to fight it.

Mail the coupon and join **AWARE** today. It's the effective, creative alternative to charity. It makes you a partner with the poor.

**QUERIES?** Phone Brian Hobbs on the direct **AWARE** line ☎ 1800 088 110 (free call).



**MONTHLY PROJECTS THAT TACKLE THE CAUSES OF POVERTY — NOT JUST THE SYMPTOMS**

#### THE WAY TO HELP

If you want your personal contribution to the World's poor to have a lasting impact, there are some questions you should ask —

### 1 Whose idea is the project — an outside agency or a local group? What happens when the money stops?

Hundreds of women in Southern India were victims of extortionate money-lenders who charged crippling interest rates. They asked CAA/Freedom for funds to set up a savings and interest-free loans scheme.

Now they are free of the clutches of the money-lenders. Offering loans through an **AWARE** project is a good test of involvement — after completion of repayment the people know they have truly earned the benefits.

### 2 How does CAA/Freedom ensure that the poorest people actually benefit?

CAA/Freedom is a secular organisation which is not party-political. But CAA/Freedom is very much aware of the political implications of projects. A village irrigation scheme may only benefit the wealthy landowners unless the poorer villagers have the power to determine where the water goes and who gets it. Many **AWARE** projects aim to assist the poor in forming co-operatives and village committees. This new political power will ensure they have access to resources previously denied to them.



#### INDIA

A farmers' organisation has pooled one-acre blocks to farm co-operatively and break their dependence on the moneylenders. Their lives have improved significantly thanks to the generosity of **AWARE** members.

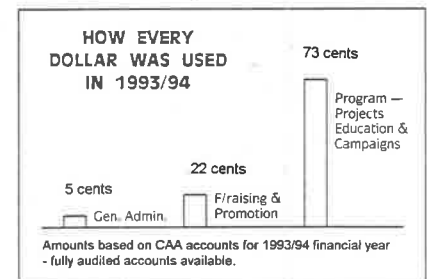
### 3 Does the project focus only on the needs of individuals?

CAA/Freedom recognises that amongst "the poorest of the poor", the mind and spirit frequently become as emaciated as the body. Re-building community spirit is essential, so **AWARE** projects help individuals who were previously powerless to see their common interest with others. This leads to unified efforts through which co-operative strength is rebuilt, and the whole community benefits.

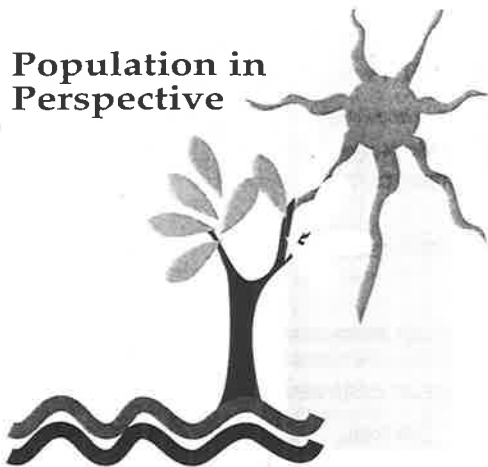


### 4 Does the money really get there?

Yes. Just ask one of the many people who have visited projects on one of our annual study tours. They have seen our supporters' money at work. Careful monitoring of your donations ensures that the money actually gets there, as well as being put to the very best use. This is how your money really works:



## Population in Perspective



Poverty is not caused by high birth rates. Poverty is a barrier to people choosing to have fewer children. Poor families see their children as their only capital — their only source of wealth — their only hope for the future. It's not surprising that large families are popular.

Birth rates begin to drop only when people have economic security, better health facilities, increased opportunities and status for women. **Precisely the core objectives of CAA projects.**

### Not only how many - how much!

It's not only the number of people which determines environmental impact.

Equally important is how much each person uses.

People in the richer countries account for three quarters of all the resources and energy consumed — and cause most of the pollution.

Encouraging smaller families is important for both the environment and for development. **Reducing consumption levels in rich countries is even more critical.**

## Why Choose AWARE?

Making a regular, substantial **AWARE** donation may mean giving it priority over other items in your budget.

Here's why we think **AWARE** deserves a high priority...

We stretch your donation...

- We multiply your money! Thanks to tax deductibility. And matching government grants — sometimes \$3 for \$1. Not forgetting the community's own contribution of labour and materials — all our projects are based on **self-help**, not hand-outs. And revolving loans mean the grant is re-used several times!
- A year's contribution at \$50 a month can fund a project worth several thousand dollars.
- We make sure the money gets there. And careful evaluation ensures that future projects benefit from past experience.
- We run a tight ship! Our costs are pared to the minimum, thanks to tremendous volunteer support and stream-lined administration.

Our Projects work because...

- They're **self-sustaining**. The projects keep going when they are no longer receiving aid.
- They're **based on self-help**. There's no loss of dignity. No risk of dependency.
- **Focus is on those in greatest need.**
- **Priority is given to women.**
- They're **cost-effective**. Many projects provide long-term benefits for less than \$20 a head.
- Our **project partners are carefully selected**. They're local, non-government, community-based groups. The best people to work closely with the poor. To help them understand why they're poor. To help them develop the resources to overcome their poverty — and their environmental problems.

And of course...  
**our projects are environmentally friendly.**



## Regular giving

**makes a world of difference**

The aid programs which have the best chance of bringing about **permanent** change in the lives of the poor require us to commit funds over a 3 to 5 year period.

**AWARE** members' pledges provide the assured future income to make these commitments.

We need many more **AWARE** members to expand these long-term programs.

Help expand our programs

of lasting change

**Join AWARE**

today

## Community Aid Abroad

We are the largest Australian non-government organisation working on community-based programs to end hunger and poverty. Our annual income is close to \$20 million.

In 1992 Community Aid Abroad and the Australian Freedom From Hunger Campaign merged. Between us, we have a vast amount of experience in helping disadvantaged people to transform their lives.

Community  Aid Abroad  
MERGED WITH FREEDOM FROM HUNGER

7 Hutt Street, Adelaide 5000

## Meet Dalrety



A star of our

Greening the World Team

**Join the Team Today**



## Join our Greening the World Team

*Disappearing forests, polluted rivers, soil erosion, starvation, disease — the problems of environment and development seem endless. But there are solutions. Solutions which are being implemented by our world-wide team of development workers and supporters.*

*One member of our team is Dalrety, a silver-haired 84 year-old grandmother from Chuchar, a village in the Indian State of Bihar. Dalrety is the leader of a forest watch group which aims to prevent further illegal logging.*

*Their work is vital because deforestation causes so many problems for the poor. Problems like the scarcity of firewood and the increasing chance of prolonged droughts. Not long ago Dalrety's village had five years with no rain — and no harvest.*

*The majority of people in the world are like Dalrety and her community. They live a subsistence lifestyle and depend on the environment for mostly free supplies of food, fuel and building materials — even medicines.*

*For them, conserving the environment is not merely a quality of life issue. It's a question of survival.*

*That's why growing more trees is an increasingly important part of the work which Community Aid Abroad supports. In one Indian project alone, communities are planting one million trees.*



## Join AWARE



## Join a growing team

*Community Aid Abroad has a large and growing team of workers and supporters.*

*Dalrety's example has led hundreds of women in her region to take similar kinds of action.*

*Our total program has a team of hundreds of thousands of people in 30 countries working on 500 projects.*

*Then there are the 12,000 Australian members. They contribute to our regular giving program, **AWARE**, and help to fund the rest of the team's work.*

*We're already making a difference. Your decision to join AWARE will make an even bigger difference...*

*...A World of Difference.*

### Types of AWARE Projects

*Though not all **AWARE** projects have the environment as a primary focus, environmental impact is always an important part of project assessment.*

*Other important features of **AWARE** projects include a focus on women, community health, training and self-help.*



### More Greening the World Projects

- Improving fish catches in Southern Thailand through conserving and restoring the mangrove forests where the fish breed.
- Tree planting programs in Eritrea and many other countries. The types of trees planted are likely to be determined by the people's needs for food, fodder and firewood.
- Setting up ecological farms in the Philippines.

Tear along perforation - maintain clean edges - fold and mail freely.

## literacy and population...

**"(Education of girls and women is) a crucial factor in lowering fertility rates, as well as reducing infant mortality and promoting economic growth."**

*Federico Mayor, Director General of UNESCO.*



It's a common assumption that people in Third World countries are poor because they have too many children. Our experience shows that it's more likely that people have large families **because they're poor.**

Poor families see children as their only capital, their only source of wealth, their only hope for the future. And when so many children die before their fifth birthday, it's not surprising that large families are popular. In any case, when adequate food, clothing and housing are beyond your means, contraceptives aren't likely to be at the top of your shopping list!

Birth rates begin to drop only when people have better health facilities, improved economic security and, most important of all, **when women have increased opportunities and status.** Precisely the core objectives of Community Aid Abroad's projects, in which literacy training plays such a crucial part.

## ... for example

In Kerala, a south-western state of India, literacy has risen to 91%, compared to 52% for India as a whole. Since education and health have improved, the birth rate in Kerala has dropped to half that of India as a whole. In fact, the birth rate in Kerala is now almost as low as in the U.S.A.

## reasons for choosing AWARE

Making a regular, substantial AWARE donation may mean giving it priority over other items in your budget. Here's why we think AWARE deserves a high priority.

### We stretch your donation...

- **We multiply your money!** Thanks to tax deductibility. And matching government grants — sometimes \$3 for \$1. Not forgetting the community's own contribution of labour and materials — all our projects are based on self-help, not hand-outs. And revolving loans mean the grant is re-used several times!

*A year's contribution at \$50 a month can fund a project worth several thousand dollars.*

- **We make sure the money gets there.** And careful evaluation ensures that future projects benefit from past experience.
- **We run a tight ship!** Our costs are pared to the minimum, thanks to tremendous volunteer support and stream-lined administration.

### Our projects work because ...

- **They're self-sustaining.** The projects keep going when they're no longer receiving aid.
- **They're based on self-help.** There's no loss of dignity. No risk of dependency.
- **Focus is on those in greatest need.**
- **Priority is given to women.**
- **They're cost-effective.** Many projects provide long-term benefits for less than \$20 a head.
- **Our project partners are carefully selected.** They're local, non-government, community-based groups. The best people to work closely with the poor. To help them understand why they're poor. To help them develop the resources to overcome their poverty through their own efforts.



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### Help expand our programs of lasting change

join  
**AWARE**

### How much to give

Of course, this is entirely a matter for you and your budget! Over 1000 AWARE members give \$50 or more a month. The average monthly contribution is \$25. If this is beyond your means, any reasonable amount given regularly is a valid AWARE contribution.

*Remember that all donations are tax-deductible (instead of receipts, we prepare and send you a statement of your donations to June 30 each year). For average income earners, a \$50 a month contribution entitles you to a refund for the year of \$213, reducing your net cost to just over a dollar a day.*

**Increase world literacy for  
a dollar a day  
Join AWARE today**

One billion people would give anything to learn how to read and write



On the other hand, you can help them by giving...

## ...a dollar a day

If you give \$30 a month to Community Aid Abroad's **AWARE** program—about a dollar a day—in a year you'll have funded a literacy program for an entire community.

In return, you'll get a brief monthly bulletin letting you know how we plan to spend the current month's contributions and giving you news of previous projects.

For the poor the benefits are immeasurable.

### Literacy transforms their lives.

No longer will they lose their land because they couldn't read the money-lender's contract —

*"The money-lender told me to put my thumb-print on the paper. I didn't know what it said, but now I know I signed for an interest rate of 100% on my loan."*

No longer will farmers die because they cannot read the safety instructions on a bag of pesticides.

No longer will babies die because their mothers can't read medicine labels.

## literacy:

### the first step on the path to development

Literacy is a tool for the poor to have more control over their lives. It gives them access to information beyond their own experience. **It enables them to live in a bigger world.**

But being able to read and write doesn't on its own end poverty. It's **functional literacy** which the poor need to help them identify the causes of their poverty—an essential first step towards overcoming it.

With functional literacy, people choose key words in their lives (examples might be *money-lender, sickness, harvest, water*) and learn to read and write these words first. They



Photo: Ponch Hawkes

discuss why these words are important, so introducing new words; the training continues in that way. Every word learned is relevant to the daily lives of the participants.

With functional literacy, people rapidly gain reading and writing skills. They also gain greater control of their lives because they become more aware of their problems and possible solutions.

## literacy projects

Not all **AWARE** projects focus on literacy. But it's an important aspect of the majority of our 500 projects in 30 countries. Examples include:

- Training 100 literacy trainers for the *Saptagram* women's functional literacy project in Bangladesh (where only 4% of women are literate). 12,000 women are expected to complete the courses over a 3-year period.
- Also in Bangladesh, we're helping the *Sun Flower* organisation work with 90 groups of rural poor in 26 villages.
- And in Orissa, one of India's poorest States, we're helping Harijan and tribal groups to run 20 education centres for a total of 850 children.

Other important features of **AWARE** projects include the involvement of women, environmental issues and self-help.