04 | From Women in Development to Gender Justice?

Why, at a time when race prejudice is being overcome, and when the prestige of another keyword 'anti-colonialism' is serving diverse interests, why do we resign ourselves so easily to the maintenance of other privileges of which women only are the victims [and] protective measures consolidate their inferior status … Equality of rights is a man's affair.

— Lefaucheux 1959, p. 452

Including women into aid and development activities has been difficult ever since official aid programs started in the 1950s and 1960s. While Third World women have been clamouring to be included and were leading drivers in the UN processes since the 1950s, Western development agencies, including NGOs, have been very slow to incorporate women's needs into their development programs, and even less inclined to look at the gender issues in power relations between men and women in developing countries, let alone gender minorities.[1] The same story applies to ACFID, which has struggled to adequately take on board women and gender in development throughout much of its history.

It can be argued that the focus of most Australian international NGOs on gender has moved little beyond women and development type activities such as microfinance and livelihoods, which can be used to entrench existing inequality as much as being empowering or liberating. ACFID's engagement with gender and development issues in the early years was driven by the major UN Women's Conferences,[2] if government funding was available, or if the regulators insisted on compliance with such legislation as the Equal Employment Opportunity Act.

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1   Here I refer to those who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, transsexual, transgender, and other sexual minorities who are regularly and systematically marginalised and oppressed in many, if not most, developing countries.
2   Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi and Beijing. ACFID was represented at three, but curiously not Copenhagen.

Apart from those times, the history of ACFID and its members had been one of little progress in advancing the cause of women in developing countries until possibly the 2000s, and nothing at all on gender and sexual minorities (Kilby and Crawford 2011). This chapter will track the 'progress' over 40 years of gender largely being resisted by the mainstream development agencies, the hard work of a few individuals in keeping gender on the agenda, and the continual revisiting of the same gender issues by NGOs.

Women and development pre-1975

How men and women, boys and girls in the community are recognised in aid and development activities has been an issue for the UN since the early 1950s, mainly through the work of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (Jain 2005). For development agencies, recognising and working on women and development issues did not come to the fore until the early 1970s. The International Women's Year activities of 1975 and the associated Mexico City Women's Conference brought the issue of women's rights to a much broader audience, and set in train a set of processes that led to the idea of gender and women's rights, ostensibly as a central plank in development, having a much greater focus.

Before 1975, there had been a raft of statements and declarations on the rights of women dating back to the UN's formation in 1945, and the League of Nations before that (Lefaucheux 1959; UNGA 1963b; Boserup 1970; Jain 2005). The Inter-American Commission on Women, which was formed in 1928, was active in working for women's roles in development through the 1950s (Meyer 1999; Charlesworth and Chinkin 2013); the CSW was established in 1946; and in 1961 US President Kennedy set up a US Commission on the Status of Women (Harrison 1980; Freeman 1999; Jain 2005). In Africa, activists sponsored by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in the 1960s had put women at the centre of ECA's analyses as early as 1966, and were implementing a prototype of 'women-in-development' projects well before its official recognition in the West in the 1970s (Quataert 2013, p. 3). The CSW was pushing for women's political rights from 1946, with a Convention on the Political Rights of Women passed by the UN in 1952. Lakshmi Menon from India, who was the head of CSW (1949–50), had already being lobbying UNESCO on the importance of girls' education (Peppin-Vaughan 2013; UNESCO 1951), which was finally officially recognised as a development priority in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) some 50 years later. In the 1950s and 1960s, CSW shifted its focus to looking at women's economic and social development to mirror the major development trends at the time and, in 1962, the UN Secretary-General asked CSW to report on the role of women in the social and economic development plans of member states (Krook and True 2012; Jain 2005).

Of course these changes were not met with open arms, and there was a lot of resistance from member states. For example, a British Foreign Office view from 1954 was that CSW's push for women's rights was 'woolly, half-baked and impractical' (Laville 2012, p. 487). CSW, therefore, was largely alone in the UN system on women's rights, with the other major agencies such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and FAO relegating women to being virtually second-class citizens by advocating what would be seen now as an anachronistic gendered division of labour, with women being confined to domestic roles (Quataert 2013; Jain 2005). Women and development was a virtual unknown in bilateral development programs, except for some pioneering work in Sweden in the mid-1960s (Nanivazo and Scott 2012).

The 1966 Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (DEDAW) was a major breakthrough in the UN system in terms of women's rights, with its pioneering argument that the 'discrimination of women impeded development' (Fraser 1995, p. 78). This declaration was later given teeth in the form of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 (INSTRAW and UNIFEM 1995; Peters 1996). The 1966 declaration had its origins in a draft declaration put to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1963, when a group of 22 developing and Eastern European countries introduced a resolution at the UNGA calling for the drafting of a resolution on women's discrimination. This was at the peak of UN work on the first Development Decade and the broad commitments being made to Third World development. It is also worth noting that no Western countries were involved in the drafting or presentation of the resolution, a point that challenges the commonly held notion that the leadership on women's rights and development came out of the West, or that it represents an agenda of Western feminists (Schech 1998; Haggis and Schech 2000; Escobar 2011; Shain 2013).

The draft DEDAW Resolution of 1963 also called on member states to appoint national commissions on the status of women. In 1967, following the Declaration, the UN Secretary-General was tasked to report back to the General Assembly on the progress of the work of member states' national commissions. In 1972, following the appointment of national commissions, the UN proposed that countries should also put in place national long-term programs for the advancement of women (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 1973). The first country to actively seek to include women in its development programs was Sweden in 1964, when it enacted legislation that mandated government assistance to women in development programs as part of its aid program (Tinker and Zuckerman 2014). Sweden was followed by the US in 1973 with the Percy Amendment 'requiring that particular attention be given to integrating women into national economies to improve their status and to assist the overall development effort' (Snyder 1995, p. 98). More broadly, the UN also

recognised the gap, and both men and women were seen as important in the development process. The 1970 UN International Development Strategy called for the 'full integration of women into the development effort' as part of the Second Development Decade Plan (quoted in Jain 2005, p. 43).

Despite this high level of debate on women's rights at the UN through the 1960s and 1970s, there was no mention of women in development in the ACFID records at the time. It seemed that in the 1960s and 1970s the women's movement and the development agenda occupied seemingly parallel universes. One explanation might be that liberation theology of the 1960s, which was very male focused and gender blind, drove a lot of development discourse and, in particular, global education thinking among NGOs (Connolly 1997).

In 1970 Ester Boserup's groundbreaking work *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970), based on her own observations in India and Senegal and the work of the ECA in the 1960s, put the issue of women and development to a much wider audience (Turner and Fischer-Kowalski 2010; Quataert 2013). It put a challenge to Western donors when she argued for 'women's integration into the development process as equal partners with men' (Drolet 2010, p. 213). In the United States Boserup's message, and the work of the ECA, led to Congress adopting the Percy Amendment (Snyder 1995), which included the establishment of a Women in Development (WID) office within USAID (in 1974). However, it was not until a US Accounting Office audit of policy compliance in the 1990s some 20 years later that USAID began to systematically comply with that Congressional directive (Miazad 2002). Similarly, the DAC convened an expert group on women in development in 1975, but the work was slow to be realised, not least in Australia where it paid lip-service at best until well into the 1990s (ADAB 1979; ADAB 1983; Snyder 1995).

The issue of women's marginalisation in development was not new even in the 1970s, particularly to women's groups in developing countries which advocated for women's rights around urbanisation, modernisation, the role of religion, intra-family patriarchal power structures, the status of women in society, and reproductive health, among many others, all of which are still relevant in the twenty-first century (Tinker and Bo-Bramson 1976). Luisbu N'Kanza from Zaire feared:

> that International Women's Year would turn out to be nothing more than just a glorified Mother's Day, and called for action that would show that women were tired of feeling powerless and wanted a share in national and international decision making. Sexism as practices by individuals and institutions was [to be] condemned (quoted in Tinker and Bo-Bramson 1976, p. 143).

The Mexico City Women's Conference (and the associated civil society tribune) was a momentous event, bringing together 8,000 women from all over the world. It 'introduced activists to the potential of pursuing their interests through the UN at a time when there were few international venues for women's rights' (Bunch 2012, p. 214). The key outcome of the Mexico City Conference was the building of a network, which the UN Conference enabled:

> Women discovered their 'brand': in every country women and girls were treated as an inferior minority. In over 200 formal and informal meetings, emerging leaders formed new friendships. Recognizing that power is taken, not given, they forged a network for change (Persinger 2012, p. 192).

The Mexico City Conference also led to a World Plan of Action around three broad objectives, one of which was the integration and full participation of women in development.[3] The plan was criticised for continuing to leave women as passive victims of 'underdevelopment', with women being seen as 'mothers, workers and citizens' rather than as having a broad range of identities and voices (Bignall 1997; Zinsser 2002, p. 149). But it was a first step as the World Plan of Action also offered guidelines for governments and the international community to follow for the next 10 years, with a set of minimum targets to be met by 1980.

The conference not only brought women's development issues to the fore but also went well beyond Boserup's economic role of women to put the structural discrimination issues that women faced in all societies onto the agenda (Koczberski 1998; Moghadam 2000; Fraser 2012; Jahan 2012; Funk 2013). It also highlighted the differences in priorities of Third World women, which were about underdevelopment and the role of race, class, caste and gender in women's marginalisation, and First World women, whose primary concerns were around gender equality (Jain 2005).

> Serious tensions and divisions surfaced, exploding any notion of 'sisterhood', 'common cause', or 'women' as one unified political agent. Simultaneously, confronting these tensions initiated a reassessment of feminist visions under the human rights rubric and through the gender lens (Quataert 2011, p. 635).

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3   The three broad objectives were full gender equality and the elimination of gender discrimination; an increased contribution by women in the strengthening of world peace; and the integration and full participation of women in development. These three objectives each reflected the particular interests of the First, Second and Third World respectively, a feature of UN conferences at the time.

It would not be until the Nairobi Women's Conference in 1985 that these different positions would begin to come together and a global feminism emerge (Moghadam 2000). This was in part because the Non-aligned Movement had a strong women's caucus, which had already met in New Delhi prior to the Nairobi conference to agree on a position that 'linked women's inequality to underdevelopment and unjust international relations' (Jain 2005, p. 83). It was rather ironic that at Beijing in 1995 it was Western feminists who brought out issues of marginalisation due to gender and race, caste, sexuality and the like, which mirrored the concerns of Third World women 20 years earlier without explicitly acknowledging them (Çağatay et al. 1986; Baden and Goetz 1997; Moghadam 2000).

Women and development in Australia

Despite these momentous global events on gender, Australian development NGOs were very slow to recognise the role of patriarchy and power in these marginalising processes on women in the countries where they worked, and so the mainstream development NGOs tended to be followers rather than leaders on the issue of women and development.[4] This lack of interest and engagement by the development NGOs was in contrast to a long history of women's NGOs in Australia dating back to the 1890s, with the women's suffrage movement and the state councils of women representing Australian women's groups (Foley 1985; Lake 1996). For example, in 1958 the Social Science Research Council, with government funding, commissioned a year-long study into the status of women in Australia, which was undertaken in 1959–60, well before DEDAW in 1967 obligated Australia to do such studies (MacKenzie 1962).

The National Council of Women was also very active in the early 1970s and, while its focus was mainly involved with the Australian domestic scene, its work did 'stray' into the international arena. For example, it sponsored a conference on Population, Development and the Role of Women in October 1973, with delegates from across the Asia-Pacific region, but with no ACFID staff or member agency involvement (National Council of Women 1973). What is clear is that women and development was not part of the aid discourse in Australia in the 1960s and into the 1970s, despite the issue being important abroad at the time, with developing-country women calling for the recognition of their rights and the issues that affected them (Tinker et al. 1976; Reid 2012). Likewise, the history of official aid in the 1970s was devoid of reference to women's roles in development processes and the consequent disadvantages they faced. To be fair,

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4   After the 1995 Women's Conference in Beijing the term gender and development was adopted.

however, aid policy at the time was devoid of references to the involvement of people more generally, particularly as aid recipients (Wilkinson 1976; Viviani and Wilenski 1978).

The records of the early years of ACFID and its Dev Ed Unit were remarkably silent on the issue of women's rights until the Mexico City Women's conference of 1975, when ACFID sent a representative to the NGO Forum, and the *Development News Digest* 'discovered' women after some years with a special issue on International Women's Year (ACFOA 1975c).[5] Despite some work from 1974 to 1978 on advancing women and development issues among ACFID member agencies following International Women's Year and the Mexico City Women's Conference, progress was limited. Neither women's rights nor gender were on the program at the Tasmanian Summer School, the major development conference at the time (ACFOA 1978b). The first mention of women and development in ACFID's Standing Policy was not until 1983 when a sentence on involving women in aid programs was added (ACFOA 1983f). This followed AusAID's recognition of women and development in a policy statement in 1980 (ADAB 1980).[6]

ACFID and the Mexico City Women's Conference

As mentioned above, it was the International Women's Year and the Mexico City Women's Conference that prompted ACFID to look at women's rights issues. In 1974, as part of the planning stage for the Mexico City conference, ACFID secured a relatively small grant of $900 from the International Women's Year Secretariat to undertake research on women in Australian NGOs and how they saw women and development in their work (Whitlam 1975; Reid 1975). The research was undertaken by ACFID staff in early 1975 through a mail survey of all ACFID members covering their policies and practices regarding women's employment in their agencies and women's participation as aid recipients in agency programs. From this survey a report was produced: *Aid in a Changing Society* (Moore and Tuckwell 1975). This report set the context for examining the role of women in development through the lens of the NGOs' philosophy; as such, it was critical of the ACFID member agencies as a whole, finding their philosophy somewhat paternalistic to both their approach to women as staff in their organisations as well as to aid recipients.

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5   The first issue was in 1972.
6   There has never been an ongoing subcommittee in ACFID's structure looking at women's rights or gender justice. At best there have been ad hoc working groups, with gender being generally subsumed under development education or policy, rather than given prominence in development practice work.

> Nowhere did the agencies recognise the different problems of women within their own organisations or as recipients of their aid, and [there is] little evidence of support for projects based in favour of increasing women's independence (Moore and Tuckwell 1975, pp. 7–8).

Given the flurry of activity around International Women's Year, with a secretariat and National Women's Advisory Committee advising and funding projects of Australian domestic NGOs and community groups to address the rights and roles of women throughout society (Reid 1975a), the dismissive response of ACFID members to women's issues evident in the survey was both surprising and disturbing. It possibly reflected a broader disconnect of development NGOs with the aims and activities of the women's movement and domestic women's NGOs at the time. It also probably reflected a disconnect between gender issues and the broader social and liberation movements in developing countries of the time, which were generally patriarchal in their structures and practices. Gender was seen as secondary in the broader struggle to avoid possible divisions within the movements (Sigmund 1990; Graham 2003; Viterna and Fallon 2008). Meer (2005) talks specifically about the case of South Africa and the anti-apartheid movement, but the same issues were found in Latin America, where gender and women's issues were seen as divisive and to be dealt with after the broader 'struggle' had achieved its aims (Hassim 1991).

Moore and Tuckwell's (1975) report suggested that the management and boards of NGOs reflected a paternalistic view of development while the activists in organisations failed to see the importance of the gender dimension in social justice and liberation struggles, and male staff and activists tended to avoid 'gender'. Needless to say their report created a furore at the 1975 ACFID Council, which was already divided over the issue of global education. There was a move from a handful of agencies to have the report pulped. As it was a report to government through the International Women's Year Secretariat, ACFID Council agreed that instead of withdrawing the report it should have a strong disclaimer from ACFID on the cover, and that the ACFID Executive Committee would decide how the report was to be used (ACFOA 1975d; Moore 2011). The report, however, had already been printed and distributed without a disclaimer and so the resolution had little practical effect.

The Mexico City Women's Conference itself and Australia's leadership in it was very important in advancing women's rights. While there was a strongly worded Australian government brief articulating its support for women's rights in development, it was far from certain whether the brief reflected either the views of AusAID or the Australian NGOs of the time:

> Since aid is a grim necessity due to the injustices in the old international order, women in donor countries could profitably make sure that programs

and projects do not make women in recipient countries more marginal and dependent and that they do not impose western cultural sex-role stereotypes (Australian Government Brief quoted in Moore 1975).

While Australia developed a National Plan of Action in 1978, there is little reference in it to the second key plank of the Mexico City Conference on the participation of women in development until the Copenhagen Women's Conference of 1980.

The Mexico City Women's Conference, however, did put women and development on the agenda of ACFID and AusAID, albeit tenuously, as it was to be another 10 years before women and development was to become more of a mainstream issue for either of them. As a response to the Women's Conference, AusAID appointed two relatively junior women and development officers to advise on the aid program but offered little high level policy direction to guide them. The role of the WID advisers in AusAID was to appraise projects against WID principles and make suggestions to the desk officers. As the WID policy framework was sketchy at best, it was up to desk officers whether they took the advice of the WID adviser or not. In 1976 AusAID adopted policies specifically taking into account the particular needs of women at the design, implementation and appraisal stage of development projects (ADAB 1979). These included guidelines for appraisal, more projects targeting women, more women students in the scholarship program, and a women's affairs committee was set up which reported regularly to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

These policy guidelines, however, were poorly implemented and the 1979 AusAID report to the DAC went on to say that it was too hard to measure the effects of Australia's aid program on women or the extent to which they had been included (ADAB 1979, p. 19). Four years later in another report to the DAC, AusAID reported that little had changed on the issue of women and development, with the low level of demand from recipient countries for WID projects being given as the reason for the lack of progress. An example was that the low number of women on scholarships had barely moved since 1978 (ADAB 1983, p. 12). In the mid-1970s AusAID had little policy direction on social inclusion of any kind, let alone women, as it struggled with its own internal divisions (Viviani and Wilenski 1978).

ACFID was concerned that with the new Coalition government in 1975 the 'temporary' women and development unit in AusAID would be closed down, and so ACFID regularly lobbied Andrew Peacock, the foreign minister at the time, to keep the positions (ACFOA 1976d; Batt 1977). While the positions remained it was not until Dr Ruth Pfanner from the United Nations joined AusAID in 1980 that the role of women in development was taken more seriously.

The policy direction on women and development until then was generally embedded in statements by the foreign minister, for example, when Andrew Peacock in 1976 said that Australia's aid took into account the special problems of women in developing countries (ADAB/DFAT 1980, p. 127). In the AusAID 1978–79 *Annual Report* a couple of paragraphs under the heading 'Women in Development' indicated that women's projects from developing countries 'will receive particularly sympathetic consideration' (ADAB 1980, p. 16). There was also a symbolic gift in 1979 of $100,000 over five years to the UN Voluntary Fund for Women (administered by ESCAP) for the Asia-Pacific region. It was not until a chapter on women and development in the 1984 Jackson Committee report on the aid program, drafted by Ruth Pfanner and pushed by Professor Helen Hughes, a member of the committee, that this issue was put firmly on the AusAID agenda. Following this, detailed policies were developed and funding was provided (Jackson Committee 1984; Pfanner 2012).

Within ACFID there was also little progress despite the global interest of developing country women's groups and local NGOs at the time. In the late 1970s ACFID still struggled with the issue, with only a few tentative steps being made around realising women's equality and rights. In 1976 there was a half-day consultation with Germaine Greer on women in development with 80 women from NGOs attending and 10 from AusAID. In the same year ACFID put out the 'We Women' resource kit for NGOs (ACFOA 1976i). But, as mentioned above, two years later women and development was completely overlooked at the Tasmanian Summer School in 1978. In 1977 the ANCP's appraisal criteria included a focus on self-reliance, women, and social justice. Of course the women's projects supported at the time were invariably handicrafts and small-scale income generation, with little about women's rights. Apart from these largely women-led gestures, ACFID and its members really did not heed the exhortation of the Mexico Women's Conference, and women seemed to become more marginal in development programs. This was due largely to the paternalist attitudes of the time, which continue to some extent to this day (Kilby and Crawford 2011). After Kate Moore left ACFID in 1978, women and development fell off the ACFID agenda until after the 1980 Women's Conference in Copenhagen.

In Australia, the National Women's Advisory Council (NWAC), set up in 1978, had the task of not only oversighting women's inclusion in the domestic sector through a broad policy and coordination role (Sawer 1998), but it also had a brief to work with DFAT in preparing for the Copenhagen Women's Conference around women and development issues. This did not happen in any real sense. There was certainly no interaction with either AusAID or ACFID on women and development until 1982 when, after a submission from AusAID, the NWAC recommended a WID fund in the aid program (National Women's Advisory Council 1984). Bob Whan, the ACFID executive director at the time, reflected in

1981 that there seemed to be no space for men in the WID work when he was thinking of strengthening ACFID's work in the area (Whan 2008). On the other hand, there did not seem to be much push by the male leadership of NGOs to be included in that space either, and 35 years later the ACFID gender equity working group is still largely made up of women.

The Copenhagen Conference

Globally, a number of shifts were occurring, which started at Mexico City but were taken forward in key locations. In the United States the Carter administration put a greater focus on women in USAID programs, setting up a WID office and showing some improvements in its women's programs. The critics of WID, however, argued that these programs were supporting unfair and unequal systems and were training women as clients and ignoring the structural issues they faced (Jaquette and Staudt 2006). This was the context in which the Copenhagen Women's Conference was held where there were clear divisions. A strong anti-Western theme came through in both the Conference and the NGO Forum. The sharp difference between Third World and First World women at the forum made participants feel uncomfortable and begin to question the usefulness of these forums (Çağatay 1986; Margolis 1993; Kapadia 1995; West 1999; Zinsser 2002). The key areas of difference between feminists from the North and South, like at Mexico City, were about whether gender could be separated from issues of nationality, race, and class, and about the differing priorities of 'development' for the Third World feminists and 'equality' for Western feminists. These divisions put some pressure on the solidarity of the global women's movement.

The Copenhagen Women's Conference itself, however, made important progress and sharpened the focus on women in development. It recognised that women's agency and self-reliance should be supported. The disadvantages that rural women faced were also key elements of the Program of Action (Zinsser 2002). The Australian delegation took a lead 'to promote integration of women in development and support and complement efforts made by governments at national level' (ADAB/DFAT 1980, p. 128). It also took a lead on the issue of power and patriarchy.

> Australia and New Zealand were persistent in pressing for independent recognition of male power as a cause of women's low status, and of the ways women were exploited because of their reproductive roles … but the Program of Action contains few references that are feminist in this anti-patriarchal sense (Jaquette 1995, p. 55).

ACFID was caught out by Copenhagen. While the Australian delegation included domestic and Indigenous NGOs and an AusAID representative, there was no one from ACFID on the delegation (Office of Women's Affairs 1981). At Copenhagen the Australian delegation initiated a resolution on women and development assistance programs; it also co-sponsored resolutions on battered women (Office of Women's Affairs 1981). While the conference was not seen as a success,[7] the Australian government, however, made it clear that it supported the positive changes emerging from the Copenhagen Women's Conference, in particular the resolutions it sponsored and co-sponsored. In an interesting aside, a resolution noted that women's disadvantage was based on a number of 'isms': racism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, as well as the very contentious Zionism. As part of the negotiations the Australian delegation tried to have the term 'sexism' added to the list of causes of women's disadvantage.

> Inequality for women in most countries stems to a very large extent from mass poverty caused by underdevelopment which is a product of imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism and also of unjust economic relations. The unfavourable status of women is aggravated in many countries by *de facto* discrimination on the grounds of sex (footnote: many countries call this sexism) (Office of Women's Affairs 1981, p. 29).

Australia also co-sponsored resolutions on 'battered' women (domestic violence) and women with disabilities, two issues that were to wait almost another 30 years to be recognised in aid programming by either AusAID or ACFID and its members. An important outcome was that developing countries recognised for the first time that there was an issue with domestic and gender-based violence, and agreed with a call for the UN to look into it (Office of Women's Affairs 1981, p. 30). Australia and Asian countries worked to strengthen the reference to rural women, given the focus of Australia's development assistance program at the time. Australia also formulated a resolution on women in development assistance programs, which was co-sponsored by Pacific countries. This resolution emphasised the need for women to be involved in development aid planning, policy and implementation. The interests of women were to be taken into account in all projects and programs; more resources to be allocated to women's programs; capital funding to be given for skills and income generating activities; and involvement of women, including women affected by these programs, in the planning. While there is no evidence that this resolution

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7   There were divisions around Zionism and Palestinian rights, with Australia, the US and Canada voting against the final resolution on these grounds. This decision by Australia to vote against the resolution was not made by the delegation, which recommended approval with reservations on the Zionism clause. Instead, it was taken at the highest levels of government, probably at Cabinet level, and the decision to vote against it was mainly about Australia's relations with the US and the US Alliance in the context of the Cold War.

was then adopted in Australia's aid policy, the issue of women in development was beginning to get onto the agenda, and not merely remain as a sector to be funded.

While ACFID was not represented at the Copenhagen Conference or the NGO Forum, the events surrounding the conference stirred ACFID into action. There was a much more concerted push and a stronger lobby in ACFID by a group of mainly Melbourne-based women who had been meeting since 1979 on the issues of getting women and development issues on the ACFID agenda (Poussard 2012). In 1980, following the Copenhagen Women's Conference, the ACFID Council passed a resolution that member agencies review internal policies with regard to participation and rights of women, and that the ACFID secretariat support them in this (ACFOA 1980b). In 1981 a group of member agency women held a conference in Melbourne and put out the Lowanna Declaration on Women and Development, which led to the establishment of the Women and Development Network of Australia (WADNA) in 1982 (Kennedy 1992).

Also in 1981, a Women in Development Interim Committee of ACFID was established. ACFID applied for a special purpose grant from AusAID to fund its women in development awareness raising activities. A major women in development workshop was held and ACFID lobbied for a specialist WID fund (ACFOA 1981e).[8] At the same time, the National Council of Women was recommending that government engage more with NGOs on the issue of women and development (National Women's Advisory Council 1982).

At the 1982 ACFID Council there was a resolution to study the effects of aid on women (ACFOA 1982a). In the end the study did not occur, probably due to fears of another controversial report like Moore and Tuckwell's of 1975 being produced. Through 1983 the push for stronger women and development policies and work among NGOs continued, with a conference in July at ANU looking at issues facing women and development (ACFOA 1983d). Russell Rollason, the executive director of ACFID, speaking at the conference noted that 'men from agencies are not participating in the women and development discussion, and they [the men] are not hearing the concerns being brought from the third world' (Rollason 1983, p. 142). He went on to say, rather optimistically, that great strides had been made in ACFID on its approach to women and development since 1974. What he did not say, however, was that most of this progress had happened in the previous two years due mainly to the drive of WADNA. While ACFID had missed the boat with mainstream Australian women's organisations, WADNA did link with them and was able to advance the women and development agenda among mainstream agencies and prompt ACFID into more action. At one point

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8   In New Zealand a special WID fund was set up in 1983 with a greater government matching grant (Lowe 1993).

there was a suggestion that the mainstream Australian women's organisations be represented on WADNA's governing body. While that did not happen, they were nevertheless very supportive (Poussard 2012).

Despite the action from WADNA, other changes in ACFID were still slow in coming. ACFID's standing policy first mentioned WID in 1983 by way of an additional sentence on 'involving women in aid programs' (ACFOA 1983f, p. 1). Interestingly, it was not in the first draft of the policy and came three years after AusAID's policy statement on women and development (ACFOA 1983b). In 1983 both New Zealand and Australia gave special consideration to women and development through their subsidy schemes with a higher 75 per cent government match (ACFOA 1983b; Lowe 1993). The problem with this approach was that a lot of the women's projects at the time (and even now) were naïve, assuming that either women's participation was enough, or that promoting the type of work that men were not interested in and could be done by women would produce meaningful change. Of course, this avoided the messy and political business of addressing the causes of structural inequality (Mayoux 1995).

In preparation for the 1984 Nairobi Women's Conference another survey of ACFID members was undertaken (ACFOA 1984c). When ACFID discussed the proposed review of women in aid agencies, the executive with memory of the furore 10 years earlier noted that the issue was sensitive and that the executive should retain editorial control over the final report (ACFOA 1985b). *The Role and Status of Women in ACFID member agencies* report by Aida Maranan was important in that it showed a clear change over the previous 10 years with respect to women staff in NGOs, with recruitment policies resulting in more women in management and project officer positions. The report did point out, however, that this led to a 'dichotomy between the in-Australia role and status of women and the overseas concern for women and development' (Maranan 1985, p. 2). The focus of ACFID member agencies was on recruitment and affirmative action and more hiring of women to top positions but less on improving field practice. 'When you look back 30 years a lot seems to have happened; but when you stand in the middle as we do now things seem to be moving awfully slowly' (p. 2).

The Nairobi Women's Conference

The Nairobi Conference of 1985 represented a breakthrough in NGO activism with 14,000 NGO representatives (Patton 1995, p. 62). The big issues at the conference were solutions to growth and Third World debt. In addition the Forward Looking Strategy from the conference:

integrated issues on the basis of gender language: the participation of women in development and recognition that current development strategies actually damaged women and their status (Patton 1995, p. 73).

The conference was a major step forward for women in development, and saw a sea change with the adoption of a goal of 'transformation of women's status in society, to enable them to participate fully in reorienting the development process itself' (Sweetman 2012, p. 392). It also recognised that 'the development strategies [then in place] actually damaged women and their status' (Patton 1995, p. 62). Most important was the reconciliation between Third World and First World feminists and the emergence of a global consensus (Çağatay et al 1986; Moghadam 2000). This consensus was in part due to the effects of the Thatcher and Reagan governments' responses to the global debt crisis, of austerity and the implementation of neoliberal policies required of Western donors. Consensus was also partly due to the role of the network of Southern-led development feminists DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), which had the aim of 'reorienting the economic discussions scheduled for the Third Women's World Conference in Nairobi … and help reveal the nature and structure of power' (Quataert 2013, p. 12).

The Nairobi Conference also prompted further activity in both AusAID and ACFID; there were a number of training workshops for AusAID staff on women in development and a procedure on implementing its Women in Development policy (Reid 1985). ACFID also sent three women to Nairobi who then did a speaking tour to ACFID members on their return. ACFID, however, was still playing catch up in terms of development practice. It did not seem to see the women and development implications for good aid practice, let alone advancing women's rights. In a major report on aid effectiveness the executive summary had the phrase 'especially women' (probably added at the last minute), but there was no mention of women or women in development in the main report despite the coverage of Nairobi at the time (ACFOA 1986b).

A much sharper government policy on women and development and affirmative action prompted ACFID into action on agency staffing policies. In 1987 ACFID passed a policy statement on equal employment opportunity for member agencies to adopt. Elizabeth Reid, speaking to it, noted that women working in Australian NGOs (much like Australian society more broadly) were occupationally and hierarchically clustered, receiving both lower pay and less access to decision-making within member agencies (ACFOA 1987a). As a result, in 1988, ACFID prepared an Affirmative Action Manual for all agencies, but it was not until 1994 that it passed its own affirmative action policy with regard to the secretariat's practices, including having 30 per cent of women on all committee structures, paid paternity and maternity leave, and a sexual harassment policy (ACFOA 1994a).

The 1990s and the Beijing Women's Conference

By 1990, in the lead up to the Beijing Women's Conference, ACFID started to push harder on having a comprehensive women and development policy. In 1992 the ACFID Council passed a resolution that by 1995 all agencies undertake a WID review, have specific action plans, and the agency head be responsible for integrating WID and having affirmative action plans in place. ACFID would have a women and development subcommittee, and a WID adviser whose role would be to look at the barriers for WID integration – for example, cultural values, traditional roles, competing demands of family and livelihood, lower status of women, and so on – and also establish a women's network (ACFOA 1992a; ACFOA 1992b). With some of the key people leaving the network to form the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) in 1985, WADNA had largely collapsed by the 1990s. IWDA was aimed to showcase good gender and development practice in aid programs and advocate for gender inclusion policies in government programs.

An early task of the WID adviser was an affirmative action audit in which 28 agencies were surveyed. The results were an improvement on the 1975 and 1985 surveys and, as it was a self-reporting survey, perhaps agencies at least saw the importance of being seen to be doing something. Sixty-three per cent said they gave WID a high priority above all other sectors but, when that figure was unpacked a little, over half of the respondents had some women-only programs; a similar percentage had no WID guidelines; less than half of the sample indicated they had consulted with women's groups; and only 11 per cent had programs that could be described as gendered, that is, dealing with 'feminist' issues related to power and structural inequality (Mitchell 1994). The 1993–94 gender audit revealed slow progress since the 1985 Maranan study, and ACFID members, like other sectors in Australian society, were also behind internationally on equal employment opportunity practice with respect to women. For example, while 88 per cent of International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) members had paid maternity leave, only 60 per cent of ACFID agencies had maternity leave, and mostly unpaid (Mitchell 1995).

The Beijing Women's Conference marked a further step forward from the Nairobi Women's Conference and introduced the terms 'gender' and 'empowerment' to reflect the power relations and patriarchy inherent in women's disadvantage and marginalisation. It accepted that women's rights were human rights (Chow 1996; Eyben and Napier-Moore 2009). It also introduced a grand vision of 'gender mainstreaming', so that women's issues were not on the edge but rather these issues of gender and women's marginalisation were central in government and

NGO policy and practice (Bunch and Fried 1996; Chow 1996; Timothy 2005). The conference, however, was not without its critics, especially from the more conservative NGOs and governments which had reservations and objections, describing it in terms like 'feminist imperialism that reflects disrespect for religion and culture, an overzealous individualism, and an effort to impose Western values that destroy the family and local communities' (Bunch and Fried 1996, p. 203). This conservative backlash was to dog the implementation of the Platform of Action. There have been many attempts to revise the text at later CSW meetings, with many countries stepping away from the agreements they had made (Timothy 2005).

Figure 8 Janet Hunt and a Pacific women's delegation at Beijing.
Source: ACFID.

In development practice the idea of gender mainstreaming was seen as synonymous with women's inclusion, which had been around since the 1970s, and that 'women's empowerment as a central element in international development discourse' was the way forward (Eyben and Napier-Moore 2009, p. 285). The problem with the aid sector was that it was more concerned with doing what was doable rather than doing what was transformational. While women's empowerment was the headline word, in practice there was enough 'wriggle room' for it to be reinterpreted, shifting 'from transformation in societal relations as the core of empowerment, to becoming a technical magic bullet of micro-credit programmes and political quotas for women' (Eyben and Napier-Moore 2009, p. 287; Kilby 2011). The World Bank argued that

women's empowerment was 'smart economics' and very quickly the 'meanings of empowerment associated with solidarity and collective action were being crowded out' (Eyben and Napier-Moore 2009, p. 294), and 'economic empowerment' was to be the new buzz word.

Another issue was the competing agendas at the Social Development Summit held in 1995 in Copenhagen. Unlike Beijing, it was a conference of bureaucrats more than activists. The Copenhagen Summit put poverty (and women's poverty) front and centre in preparing the groundwork for the Millennium Declaration and associated MDGs. This suited the aid bureaucrats as 'gender equity [was] potentially more threatening to the power and privilege of policymakers themselves in their own gender roles, in contrast to poverty, which relates to a constituency "out there"' (Eyben 2006, p. 597).

In short, the Beijing gender agenda was more transformational in its aims, and that is perhaps why its initial impetus in the 1990s has faded through the 2000s in favour of the MDGs. The other issue is the lack of unanimity on the Beijing Platform of Action and a push from religious and conservative quarters to water down or delete some provisions of the platform (Andersson and Togelius 2011; Quataert and Roth 2012). Quataert argues that '[g]ender equity – whether at home, or in family and personal status law, or in political life – has emerged as one of the major points of geopolitical confrontation for global power elites' (2011, p. 632). The implication is that advancing gender justice will be very difficult in the 2010s, with the main aim being to hold onto the important gains made in the 1980s and 1990s.

ACFID after Beijing

Beyond picking up the rhetoric of empowerment there was little change within ACFID on addressing the implications of the Beijing Platform of Action. While there continued to be gender training, there was little evidence of gender mainstreaming in NGO work (ACFOA 1997a; 1997d). Reports by AusAID and others about NGOs' work with gender were not encouraging, and by 1998 the ACFID gender group was waning (AusAID 1995a; ACFOA 1997d; Hunt 1998). It was another 10 years before gender was to be picked up with the same enthusiasm as in the early 1990s (Kilby and Crawford 2011). This was also the case in official and development agencies, both bilateral and multilateral, with Charlesworth (2005) arguing that in the UN there is 'a resistance to or a misunderstanding of gender mainstreaming … [and] by referring to women and children [this] reinforces women's identity and value as mothers [only]' (p. 10). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which had been taking the lead on gender justice and rights-based development, struggled with little to

show of gender mainstreaming as late as 2006, and even by 2009 there was not a supportive institutional framework (UNDP 2006; UNDP 2009). A similar story can be found in any number of bilateral and multilateral organisations 10 years after Beijing (Kilby and Crawford 2011). It was this poor report card that prompted a sharper focus by NGOs, bilaterals and multilaterals alike so that by the 2010s many development agencies had improved their track record on issues of gender, and certainly around basic human needs for women and girls.

By the 2010s, while gender still has some way to go to be fully mainstreamed into Australian NGO work, it was an issue that ACFID members were more than aware of and struggling with (Kilby and Crawford 2011). While there was still not a gender committee within ACFID despite the 1995 recommendation, there was an active gender equity working group which made sure ACFID member voices were heard, and that gender had been incorporated into the Code of Conduct under both good development priorities as well as respect for human rights. Gender was also one of three strategic areas for ACFID, the other two being human rights and civil society. 'Gender-transformative approaches that address the root causes of injustice, challenge harmful gender norms, and foster progressive changes in power relationships between women and men should be prioritised' (ACFID website, 2014).

ACFID has also taken a lead on gender-based violence. Forty years after it was raised as a key women's issue at Mexico City it has been more or less 'mainstreamed' into ACFID's work, with most members having gender-based anti-violence programs, and recognising their importance in development. The other key issue not being addressed by ACFID or most of its members is that of same-sex relationships and gender minorities, and the discrimination issues they face (Kilby and Crawford 2011). In the 2010s there has been a sharp rise in many developing countries' national legislation circumscribing same-sex relationships, and often with draconian penalties (Saiz 2004; Altman et al. 2012). While there has been progress on some gender issues within ACFID, such as gender-based violence, and a more strategic approach to women's rights, there remains a long way to go for ACFID to pick up the human rights and development issue of same-sex and gender minorities. Even in the 2010s ACFID members recognise their weaknesses in gender and gender mainstreaming with only about 10 per cent of ACFID member CEOs being women, and far fewer if special interest women and children's NGOs are excluded.

Conclusion

For much of its 50 years ACFID has been ambivalent to varying degrees of where it sees women's rights as part of its work. For the first 20 years progress was very slow. It certainly was led by a few women but not seen as central either to ACFID members or its own work. ACFID was not alone as most development agencies were slow to adopt a focus on women and development and later on gender and development, despite the pioneering work of mainly Third World women in the 1950s and 1960s, who were working through the various organs of the UN, most notably the CSW. Even when major agreements were made, such as those at the four major UN Women's Conferences, the implementation of the agreements through aid agencies has been slow to the point of being glacial. For example, the first move by the UN to prioritise the education of girls in developing countries was in the early 1950s, but not put into practice until 50 years later through the Millennium Development Goals. It was only when it became painfully aware that 10 years after the Beijing Women's Conference that mainstreaming gender and women's empowerment had still a long way to go that the issues were taken up more forcefully.

International NGOs and ACFID were likewise slow to respond, with resistance by some NGOs to engaging with women and development in the 1970s, and not a lot of support from the ACFID executive and secretariat staff until the 1980s. There was, however, a major push from key women within NGOs from the mid-1970s through the 1980s, and AusAID provided support to strengthen NGOs' gender work prior to the Beijing Women's Conference. The result of the Beijing Women's Conference on ACFID and its members was twofold. While it emphasised the importance of gender work in NGOs, it also led to an easing of emphasis and perhaps a feeling that 'we have done gender' so let's move on. It was not until the early 2010s that gender came back on the agenda with changes to the Code of Conduct and continuing criticism so that the pace of gender work picked up. Nevertheless, gender work is still seen as largely a women's issue to be run by women. While some tentative steps were being made in the 2010s, gender justice for same-sex and other gender minorities still has a significant way to go to be taken up by the majority of ACFID members.