

Report Part Title: From Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD)

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## 2. From WID to GAD

### 2.1 The emergence of WID

The term 'Women in Development' (WID) was coined in the early 1970s by a Washington-based network of women development professionals who argued that women in the South were not benefiting equally from the modernisation and accelerated growth models that were the mainstream development paradigms in the 1950s and 1960s. They argued that women had been marginalised in development efforts, with resources and skills directed mainly towards men. A formative influence on WID was the women's movement in the North and the efforts by Western feminists to get equal rights, employment and participation in public life.

At the same time, there was an emerging body of research on women in developing countries. Ester Boserup's work on women's role in agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa was particularly influential (Boserup, 1970). Sub-Saharan Africa was characterised as an area of 'female farming systems' in which women, using 'traditional' hoe technology, assumed a substantial responsibility for food production. Her critique of colonial and post-colonial agricultural policies was that productivity-enhancing interventions and dominant Western notions about what constituted appropriate female tasks, had facilitated men's monopoly over new technologies and cash crops. This undermined women's roles in agriculture and created a dichotomy between modern cash crops and the subsistence sector. Relegated to the subsistence sector, women lost income, status and power relative to men and their contribution to agriculture became invisible (Razavi and Miller, 1995).

Boserup's study *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970) has been described as 'the fundamental text for the UN Decade for Women' (Tinker, 1990) (referring to the first decade, 1975-85). During the decade, particular attention was paid to women's productive labour and integration into the economy as a means of improving their status. This was in part a reaction to earlier policies which had defined women almost solely by their roles as wives and mothers and limited policy interventions to social welfare concerns such as nutritional education and home economics, often referred to as the 'welfare approach' (Moser, 1993).

The theoretical roots of WID lie in liberal feminism – the aim of both is to apply the liberal political values of equality, liberty and justice to women as well as men. Central to liberal feminism was the idea that women's disadvantage stems from stereotyped customary expectations held by men and internalised by women and promoted through socialisation processes. These disadvantages could, in principle, be broken down by giving girls better training and more role models, by introducing equal opportunity programmes and anti-discrimination legislation, by freeing labour markets or through some combination of these. There was little focus on men or on power relations between men and women.

Proponents of WID were not so much critical of the dominant model of development, as concerned that women had not benefited from it. Early responses to women's advocacy and the first UN International Decade for Women (1975-85) resulted in the creation of 'women in development' policies and machineries in many countries and international development organisations. Women's Ministries and Bureaux in national governments, WID desks, and 'focal points' in international agencies proliferated and WID informed the work of many women's organisations and projects. As modernisation and growth-oriented development strategies began to recognise more explicitly the failure of 'trickle down' and the need for explicit poverty reduction strategies, the 'anti-poverty' approach to women appeared, which aimed to increase both women's productivity and their participation in development interventions (Moser, 1993). WID demands for 'productive employment' were met by greater support for small-scale income-generating activities for women. This was the era of numerous 'Women in Development' projects, many of which 'misbehaved', as economic objectives were subverted into welfare action during the course of implementation (Buvinic, 1986). Interventions were often directed towards developing women's skills in nutrition or traditional handicrafts, and women-only projects did little to overcome women's economic marginalisation.

By the end of the 1970s, critiques of WID increased. For example, feminist thinkers in the 'Subordination of Women Workshop' meeting in the UK at the end of the 1970s provided a far-reaching critique of WID, arguing that it tended to isolate women as a separate and homogeneous group and that it was undecided and ambiguous in its identification and analysis of women's subordination (Young et al., 1981).

Feminists in the South presented another set of criticisms of the WID approach. They argued for women's empowerment, not their integration into development processes which, they argued, were premised on inequalities between industrialised economies in the North and poor countries in the South. The empowerment approach was influenced by anti-colonial struggles, with theoretical roots in neo-Marxism and

dependency theory. The most well-known representatives of this perspective, DAWN, an international network of Third World women researchers, advocated women working together in autonomous organisations in the context of broader anti-imperialist coalitions or in self-help initiatives to meet their own needs (Sen and Grown, 1987). One of the best examples of just such a successful organisation which has maintained its strong grassroots base over a long period is the Self Employed Women's Association in India. This organisation has at the same time been active in networking and promoting women's interests at the national level (see Box 1).

**BOX 1: THE SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (SEWA), AHMEDABAD, INDIA**

SEWA was founded in 1971 and registered in 1972 as a trade union for women in the informal sector. A few thousand women subsequently established the SEWA Bank as a co-operative to provide poor, self-employed women with access to credit and financial services and to reduce their dependence on exploitative moneylenders.

SEWA has strategically used the collective bargaining tools which have characterised many trade union movements. In areas where there are few prospects for employment, however, traditional unionising techniques do not work. In such situations, SEWA has worked at the grassroots level to form village organisations. SEWA helps women to run their own organisations, form cooperatives and bargain collectively in the marketplace.

More important than providing access to credit, SEWA has concentrated on empowering women to use their own resources more effectively. In the villages of Gujarat, and in the city markets of Ahmedabad (where SEWA has its headquarters), women are speaking out more, taking leadership roles, and realising how far they can go when they have collective bargaining power for wages, better working conditions, combating domestic violence, or improving education and family health.

Source: Adapted from SEWA homepage: [www.gdrc.org/icm/sewa.html](http://www.gdrc.org/icm/sewa.html)

### **Different concepts of gender**

It is worth summarising the different feminist approaches which contributed to and underpinned the shift to (Gender and Development) GAD, above all to show that there are different schools of thought which interacted and still interact. Calas and Smircich (1997) provide an excellent account of these different theoretical positions, which has been selectively and briefly summarised in Table 1. The table overleaf illustrates the different intellectual roots and the diversity of conceptions of human nature and sex/gender and of what constitutes a 'good society' in feminist thinking.

TITLE OF TABLE				
SCHOOL OF THOUGHT	LIBERAL	RADICAL	PSYCHOANALYTICAL	
Intellectual roots	Evolved from 18th and 19th century political theory.	Generated in the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s.	Evolved from Freudian and other psychoanalytic theories.	
Conception of human nature	Individuals are autonomous beings capable of rationality.	Human beings are fundamentally embodied sexed beings.	Human nature develops biologically and psychosexually.	
Conception of sex/gender	Sex is part of essential biological empowerment, a binary variable. Gender is socialised onto sexed human beings for appropriate behaviour.	'Sex-class' is the condition of women as an oppressed class. Gender is a social construction that ensures women's subordination to men.	Individuals become sexually identified as part of their psychosexual development. Gender structures a social system of male domination, which influences psychosexual development.	
Conception of 'the good society'	A just society that allows individuals to exercise autonomy and to fulfill themselves through a system of individual rights.	A gender/sex-free society (or maybe a matriarchy).	No gender structuring because both parents share children's upbringing.	

Source: Extract from Calas and Smircich (1997:214-15), a summary of feminist approaches.

MARXIST	SOCIALIST	POSTSTRUCTURALIST/ POSTMODERN	THIRD WORLD/ POST-COLONIAL
Based on and a 'correction' of Marxist critique and Capitalist society since the mid-19th century.	Emerged in the 1970s as part of women's liberation movements' attempts to synthesise Marxist, psychoanalytic and radical feminisms.	Located in contemporary French post-structuralism critiques of knowledge and identity.	Emerging from intersections of gendered critiques of Western feminisms and post-colonial critiques of Western epistemologies.
Human nature reflects historical and material conditions. The human essence is the ensemble of social relations.	Human nature is created historically and culturally through dialectical interrelations among human biology, society and human labour.	Decentring of the rational, self-present subject of humanism. 'Subjectivity' and 'consciousness' are discursive effects.	Analysed as a Western construct that emerged by making its 'other' invisible. Invisible or almost human.
Gender is part of historical class relations, which constitute systems of oppression under Capitalism.	Gender is processual and socially constituted through intersections of sex, race, ideology and experiences of oppression under patriarchy and Capitalism.	Sex/gender are discursive practices that constitute specific subjectivity through power and resistance in the materiality of human bodies.	Considers the constitution of complex subjectivities beyond Western conceptions of sex/gender focusing on gendered aspects of globalisation processes.
A classless society that allows for the full development of human nature.	Elimination of all systems of private/public oppression based on sex, gender, race, class, etc. and thus transformed social relations.	Ongoing deconstruction and denaturalisation of discourses and practices that constitute society.	A Western ideology produced through colonial relationships that favour Westernisation. Other social formations are possible.

A detailed discussion of each of these approaches is outside the scope of this paper. However, the diversity of approaches helps to understand why, despite the now widespread use of the term 'gender' in development discourse, different actors and agencies interpret the concept and may attempt to mainstream gender in very different ways.

In writing this paper, I do not wish to claim any spurious detachment. My experience as an Indian woman, born and brought up in Tanzania but completing my education in Britain, and influenced here by the socialist feminist school, has affected my 'positioning' on feminism and on development studies. Although I would locate myself in the post-colonial school, I am aware of the contributions made by post-structuralist and post-modern schools in challenging the 'meta-narratives' of development. Above all, however, it is my experience through the 1990s of trying to mainstream gender in the work of development agencies – from grassroots organisations, to governments and donor agencies – that informs this paper.

### **The Shift to GAD**

Since the mid-1980s, there has been a slow shift away from WID to gender and development – GAD. The term was coined by Rathgeber in 1982 and was adopted to move the focus away from 'women' and towards the relations, processes and structures which give rise to women's disadvantage. It was increasingly recognised that a focus on women alone was inadequate to understand the problems that women face and, at the same time, that women are not a homogenous category but are divided by class, race, ethnicity and other socially constructed identities and relationships.

An analysis of WID interventions from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s is well-summarised by Caren Levy (1992:135):

'...the last 15 years has seen the creation of a narrowly based women's sector, manifest in the creation of 'women in development' offices in international agencies, funding ministries of women's affairs and women's bureaus, implementing projects with women's groups. One of the most disturbing features of this 'women's sector' is that it is a weak sector. It is characterised by a lack of any real political influence, and is therefore under-funded and under-staffed, both in numbers and qualifications. A key factor underlying these characteristics is the conceptualisation of both the problems and strategies of this sector in terms of women, not gender'.

Table 2 illustrates the basic shifts which many gender advocates interested in influencing policy and practice expected to encounter in moving from the integration of women to mainstreaming a gender perspective.

**TABLE 2: THE BASIC SHIFTS IN MOVING FROM INTEGRATION OF WOMEN TO MAINSTREAMING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE**

WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT: INTEGRATION	GENDER MAINSTREAMING
Women's participation: increasing numbers but agenda already set	Beyond (but including) numbers to transform the development agenda
Focus on women: contributions and impact on women	Focus on gender bias in interventions and processes
Analysis of roles of women and men	Analysis of relations of power and inequality
Technical focus: methods, skills and tools	Political focus: agenda setting, changing institutions and organisations
Project orientation	Broader focus: programmes, partnerships, policy processes and agencies themselves

The shift from WID to GAD took place in the context of a deteriorating economic situation in industrialised market economies in the North and increasing indebtedness in the South, exacerbated by the oil crises. The global economic context changed and neo-liberal economic reform took hold, heavily promoted in the Reagan-Thatcher era. Countries in the South, particularly in Africa and Latin America, had to deal with high debt payments, and falling demand and lower prices for primary commodity exports. Structural adjustment programmes were the solution promoted by the international finance institutions, with their emphasis on economic liberalisation, market-led growth, the 'rolling back' of the state and cuts in public expenditure.

A corresponding shift took place in relation to women whose multiple roles in society were increasingly recognised by development agencies. Women were seen as excellent managers of their time, able to compensate for declining household income and state provision of services by combining different roles at home and at work in many contexts. Moser (1993) characterises this as the efficiency approach, its purpose being to ensure that development is made more effective and efficient through women's contributions. She argues that this was the dominant international agency approach to women in the 1990s.

'Efficiency' approaches have been heavily criticised for shifting social costs to women. Research has documented the negative social effects of the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 1990s, which arguably transferred costs from the state to less powerful sections of society, including women (Afshar and Denis, 1992; Moser, 1993; Kanji, 1995). Feminist economists, notably Diane Elson (1991), have shown how structural adjustment policies are imbued with male bias, in the way in which economies are conceptualised and measured, since they focus on the 'commodity' economy, to the detriment of the 'care economy' where women have a predominant responsibility.

#### BOX 2: THE ECONOMY AS A GENDERED STRUCTURE

A gendered economy approach starts from the premise that the 'economy' as defined by many economists provides at best only a partial analysis of reality. Economics focuses on the monetarised commodity or productive economy, but fails to analyse the non-monetarised reproductive economy. Productive activity involves the production of goods and services that enter the market at a price. Reproductive activities are usually undertaken at the level of the household, and involve domestic work (water and fuel collection (mainly in developing countries), food preparation, cooking, cleaning), care of children, older people and the sick, and (importantly for developing countries) household production that is for direct subsistence and not the market. Economic analysis prioritises the productive, largely ignoring the reproductive. From a gender perspective, neither the productive nor the reproductive economy is a 'gender neutral' terrain. They are both socially constructed on the basis of a gender division of labour, which assigns primacy of men in productive and women in reproductive activities.

Source: Extract from Kanji and Barrientos (2002:23)

Powerful development agencies, such as the World Bank, have reacted to research and advocacy by moving away from the structural adjustment 'packages' of the 1980s. In 1997, the World Development Report (WDR) re-emphasised the enabling role of the state and the 2000/01 WDR emphasises the importance of institutions and 'empowerment' in development. The extent to which the fundamentals of a neo-liberal approach have been modified remains a moot point, with many analysts arguing that the reforms do not go far enough, nor are they manifest in most of the policies and programmes of governments and international development agencies around the world. This wider context influences the approaches and strategies to mainstream gender in a wide range of organisational contexts.