Development Bulletin

No. 51 March 2000

Gender and governance

Features
Gender and governance in international law; criminal law and gender in Pacific Island jurisdictions; gender and reform in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands; training women for elections in Vietnam; gender and economic governance; transformative politics in Asia–Pacific

Gender and governance in Melanesia
Christian women’s groups in Solomon Islands; Kastom in Vanuatu; literacy programmes for women in Vanuatu; Christianity and women in Bougainville

Viewpoint
ICPD goals and thresholds in the Pacific; the Gender Empowerment Measure and West Java; gender and ethnicity in Nepal; gender equality in organisations

From the field
Gender and livelihood in an upland community forestry project; working conditions of garment workers in Bangladesh

ACFOA Briefing
The Network

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ISSN 1035–1132
The Development Studies Network Ltd
A.C.N. 008 613 929
Development
Bulletin
No. 51 March 2000

Gender and governance
## Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engendering good governance in practice</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rima Das Pradhan</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender and governance in international law</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hilary Charlesworth</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The differential impact of criminal law on males and females in Pacific Island jurisdictions</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tess Newton</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender discrimination: A review of legislation in Vanuatu</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sue Farran</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customary law and women's rights in Solomon Islands</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jennifer Corrin Care</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender and the reform process in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Heather Wallace</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Domestic Violence Act, gender and ethnicity: Pacific Island peoples in Christchurch</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Susan J. Wurtzburg</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in leadership in Vietnam</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Suzette Mitchell</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender and economic governance</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Janet Hunt</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in politics and good governance: Transformative politics in Asia–Pacific</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lorraine Corner</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Gender and governance in Melanesia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Hearing Melanesian women</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bronwen Douglas</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Catholic women's group, Auki, Malaita: A catalyst for change</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Josephine Barnes</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today is not the same as yesterday, and tomorrow it will be different again:</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kastom in Ambae, Vanuatu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jean Tarisesei</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A literacy programme for women in Vanuatu</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enikelen Netine</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Amba M District Council of Women: Achievements and problems</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Theresa Hopkos</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petzstorme: A women's organisation in the context of a PNG mining project</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Jacklynne Membup and Martha Macintyre</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity and women in Bougainville</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ruth Saovana-Spriggs</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Viewpoint

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICPD goals and thresholds: How well have the Pacific Island countries performed?</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>William J. House</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Gender Empowerment Measure: Issues from West Java, Indonesia 66
Peter Hancock

The impact of gender and ethnicity on access to, and control over, resources: Implications for rural development in Nepal 69
Durga Devkota and Regina Scheyvens

Understanding gender equality in organisations: A tool for assessment and action 73
Juliet Hunt

From the field
Gender and livelihood in an upland community forestry project in Bangladesh 77
Niaz Ahmed Khan

Conditions, concerns and needs of garment workers in Bangladesh 82
Syeda Sharmin Abiar

Conferences
Conference reports 85
Conference calendar 87

Publications
Book reviews 92
New books 96
Reports and monographs 100
Newsletters and journals 104
Working papers 106

Courses 108

Resources
Organisational profiles 111
Materials 115
Electronic fora 117

ACFOA briefing 118
This issue includes a variety of papers by academics, lawyers and aid workers on the relationship between governance and gender. We are very pleased to include a special section comprising papers by Papua New Guinean, Ni Vanuatu and Solomon Island women. We would like to thank them for their papers and Bronwen Douglas of the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, The Australian National University, for her assistance in editing these papers and for her insightful introduction to them. We believe they add a most important dimension to the discussion on governance and its gender dimensions.

We have ensured that the other sections of the journal provide information that is relevant to the gender and governance theme. We have listed recent publications, current research, conferences and materials that provide further information on gender and governance.

**Viewpoint**

Juliet Hunt provides a valuable paper outlining practical tools for assessing and understanding gender equality in organisations. The other three papers in this section all focus on gender issues and are based on recent research and first hand experience in West Java, Nepal and the Pacific Islands.

**From the field**

In this section, the Network continues its policy of publishing results of current research. The two papers are based on recent research in Bangladesh and deal with very different roles of women – rural women involved in an upland community forestry project and urban women working in the garment industry.

**Financial support**

We would like to thank the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project at The Australian National University, for helping fund the printing costs of this issue.

**ACFOA briefing**

The ACFOA briefing keeps you up to date with NGO aid concerns. In this issue they provide a summary of their 2000–2001 budget submission to government. ACFOA is campaigning for the government to maintain funding at the same real levels across the aid programme, with increased funding for East Timor and Africa.

**Next Development Bulletin**

Our next issue will focus on the relationship between HIV/AIDS and development and the role of development assistance in addressing the disease and its impact. This issue will be produced in time for distribution at the international conference on HIV/AIDS to be held in Durban, South Africa, 9–14 July. If you wish to contribute please contact us.

Good reading

Pamela Thomas, Mary-Louise Hickey and Bronwen Douglas
Gender and governance: Issues of policy and practice

To date little attention has been given to the practical application of gender equity within good governance programmes and where discussion of engendering governance has taken place, it has seldom included the perspectives of village people. The papers in this issue of Development Bulletin consider the practical application of international and national legislation in addressing gender and human rights, in supporting greater equity in political decision making, and ways to ensure that government reform processes do not disadvantage women.

From a very different perspective, six Melanesian women discuss the strategies they have employed in rural villages to improve their effectiveness in decision making and governance. Their papers, introduced by Bronwen Douglas, point very clearly to the importance of Christianity in Melanesian women's lives and its power as a vital cultural element in Melanesian governance and women's place in it.

Several themes emerge from the 17 papers presented. These are: the importance of legislation as the basic framework for good and gender sensitive governance; the contradictions between the concepts of good governance and traditional leadership; the lack of common knowledge of basic human rights and the poor understanding of the law as it pertains to rights, electoral systems, democracy and equality at all levels of society; and the lack of political will to empower women beyond statements of policy and legislation. These papers make it clear that good governance will remain a concept only while discriminatory legislation remains in place or legislation can be interpreted or implemented in ways which are discriminatory. Papers from the Pacific and New Zealand provide examples of the need to enact legislation which does not discriminate against women or men in its content, interpretation or implementation.

Rima Das Pradhan considers national legal systems within the framework of the Fourth Beijing World Conference on Women and its Platform of Action, and points to the need for aid donors to make stronger links between governance and gender and to ensure that support for judicial reform incorporates gender concerns. In international law, Hilary Charlesworth provides examples of the limited practical impact of legislative change or international conventions on improving women's representation. Although international practices may not directly discriminate, they can effectively inhibit women's participation by relying on norms that reflect male life patterns. A major inadequacy of international law is that gender is understood as a synonym for sex and the law on sex discrimination is identified with equal treatment of men and women. She questions whether balanced participation of the sexes in international organisations would make a difference.

Jennifer Corrin Care, Tess Newton and Sue Farran, all of the School of Law, University of the South Pacific, provide insights into the differential impact of criminal law on men and women, the contradictions between customary and constitutional law regarding women's rights, access to land, nationality and leadership and the differences between the law on paper and in practice. In Pacific Island countries legislation is often over 100 years old with little reform, while perceptions of morality and male and female roles have changed considerably. These laws have a very negative impact on women, most particularly those that relate to rape, violence and sexual abuse. Rectifying the legal imbalances must go beyond changing the words of the law and include re-examining basic concepts as well as recruitment policies, training programmes and work practices.

In considering the reform processes and the development of good governance policies and practice in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, Heather Wallace indicates that there have been significant changes in gender policy but that it is unclear what substance will be given to the rhetoric of policy. She calls for a more trusting relationship between NGOs and governments if gender policies are to be put into practice. There is the perception that the integration of gender issues into legislation and planning is
determined by international agencies and aid donors. As a result the reform process is not seen to reflect the desire and commitment of the governments.

For Pacific Islanders living in New Zealand, the relationship between gender and governance is strongly influenced by ethnicity, language, cultural values and different interpretations of the law. Susan Wurtzburg of Lincoln University reviews changes to the New Zealand Domestic Violence Act and points to the urgent need for governments, in countries where there are minority or migrant groups, to ensure that the laws, particularly those regarding women, are well publicised through a variety of appropriate media and in appropriate languages. Her paper provides a case study of the problems faced by Pacific Island women seeking justice in situations that are predominantly white, male, educated and middle class.

While the ability of women to participate in political leadership is relatively limited in the Pacific, Suzette Mitchell shows that in Vietnam there has been a very high involvement of women at all levels of formal decision making for the last 60 years. Gender equity was enshrined in Vietnam’s first Constitution in 1946 and has remained a feature of Vietnamese politics since.

Using an example from Laos, Janet Hunt reviews economic governance activities supported by Australian development assistance and suggests much greater Australian government attention be paid to gender equity in economic development.

Concluding the papers in this first part of the discussion, Lorraine Corner of UNIFEM, Bangkok, discusses the concept of transformative politics and provides a valuable overview of the factors that influence women’s participation in politics in East and Southeast Asia. She provides background information on organisations that support women in politics and networks and institution building activities in the region.

These papers point strongly to the need for development assistance organisations to ensure that planning and implementing governance projects are based on a full awareness of the gender dimensions of existing legislation, its relationship to customary law, and the gender bias in its drafting, enactment, interpretation and application. Consideration should be given to providing a climate in which women and men are aware of the law and their rights in terms of democratic processes and are protected from bias resulting from legislation and its implementation.

Hearing Melanesian women

Bronwen Douglas’s introduction and the six papers by Melanesian women provide important insights into gender and governance issues in rural villages – the situation within which most Melanesian women live. These papers outline the efforts of women to be heard, to gain credibility and to work together to improve village conditions. The papers highlight the importance of Christianity in their lives, their decision making and as the foundation for Melanesian governance. It is clear that any future attempts to improve governance and to adequately incorporate gender issues, must carefully consider the role of the churches in the formation and function of the women’s groups that provide the foundation for village life and development activities.
Engendering good governance in practice

Rima Das Pradhan, Australian Legal Resources International

Introduction

Governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs. It is the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and obligations, and mediate their differences (UNDP 1997). The common strategy of development institutions to promote good governance involves reforms to promote predictability, accountability, transparency, efficiency, equitability and participation. In order to maximise the benefits of development assistance and economic development, the strategy commonly aims to: improve economic management; strengthen public-sector management; promote legal and judicial effectiveness; and strengthen processes for effective civil society participation and representation. 'Engendering' governance strategies involves the integration of gender into all areas of policy and programming so as to address the structural, attitudinal, cultural and institutional barriers faced by women.

'Good governance' emerged as a priority in the mid-1980s as critical to the provision of development assistance. It now shapes the policy of every major multilateral and bilateral development institution. It is based on a belief that corruption, poor control of public funds, lack of accountability, human rights abuses, and excessive military expenditure have undermined 50 years of international development efforts (see, for example, Faundez 1997, Orford and Beard 1998, Pritchard 1996, Turner and Hulme 1997). A recent landmark study by the World Bank (1998) stresses the crucial role of good governance for sustainable development. It shows how, with a good policy environment and sound country management, an additional 1 per cent of GDP in development assistance translates into a 1 per cent decline in poverty and a similar decline in infant mortality. Where governance is weak, development assistance has much less impact and is often wasted.

Studies have shown that an effective judiciary and legal system are fundamental to the promotion of sustainable development. A predictable legal environment with a reliable and well-trained judiciary is necessary to ensuring good governance and the protection of human rights. It is essential that a legal system have the constitutional right to investigate and supervise executive and administrative powers. Honest law enforcement agencies that effectively implement court decisions are essential, and an effective court administration system provides for efficient access to justice.

However, equality before the law is not always achieved, and women still face traditional barriers including:

- poor access to laws, legal systems and the law making process;
- absence/invisibility of women's rights within various legislative frameworks;
- discrimination in areas such as property, inheritance, and medical and criminal law;
- prohibitive cost of accessing legal services;
- lack of gender sensitivity within the judiciary and enforcement agencies;
- lack of women judges, and judicial officers and advocates in positions of decision making;
- high cost of legal education; and
- demands of the legal profession being irreconcilable with family responsibilities, preventing access to positions of power.

Divergence: Policy and practice

The international policy framework

The Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 agreed on an agenda for empowering women and accelerating implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, adopted in 1985. The Platform for Action (PFA) established a set of actions aimed at achieving significant change by the year 2000 and was adopted by 163 countries.

The PFA and Declaration emerged after a preparatory process (the most participatory of its kind) wherein women from villages in the poorest of countries to urban centres in the richest of countries demanded a space for active input. The message, though not new, was a universal one: 'Women's ... full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including ... in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the advancement of equality, development and peace' (Beijing Declaration, paragraph 13).

The PFA noted that the feminisation of poverty has become a matter of key concern in countries in economic transition. Furthermore, 'the failure to adequately mainstream a gender perspective in all economic analyses and planning and to address the structural causes of poverty is ... a contributing factor' (Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 48). It was stressed
throughout that development and economic growth can only be sustained and sustainable ‘through improving the economic, social, political, legal and cultural status of women’ (Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 54).

Beijing + 5
The Beijing + 5 Conference, to be held in July 2000, will assess achievements thus far. The September 1999 Asia-Pacific NGO Symposium identified some key concerns:

The inadequate mechanisms for ensuring that governments are responsive and accountable to citizens for the fulfillment of their international obligations to implement commitments to social and economic development that involves, benefits and empowers women, eradicates poverty and safeguards natural resources.

The lack of political will to empower women beyond statements of policy and legislation and to truly redress systemic and structural imbalances, which is reflected in insufficient resource allocations and support mechanisms to achieve these objectives and the all-too-frequent reliance on micro-schemes and initiatives to address macro, systemic or structural problems (Declaration 1999).

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 43

In preparation for Beijing + 5, the annual meeting of the 43rd CSW at the United Nations, 1-19 March 1999, devoted much of its time to negotiating the text concerning institutional arrangements for implementing the PFA, and many quantitative and qualitative changes were identified (see Spence and Waghray 1999). Clearly echoing the broader governance framework of most donor agencies, the elements necessary for national machineries to be effective are considered to be: clear mandates; accountability mechanisms; partnership with civil society; transparent political process; adequate financial and human resources; and continued strong political commitment. The draft text stresses the importance of international cooperation in order to assist the work of national machineries and systems.

Various national actions are recommended:
• strengthening national machineries and the advancement of women, and increasing resources to do so;
• mainstreaming gender effectively;
• reforming laws;
• training and building women’s capacity;
• gender-sensitising ministers, bureaucrats and the legal profession; and
• developing methods for assessing the quantitative value of women’s unremunerated work in order to devise appropriate policies.1

The international community is urged to:
• encourage multilateral and bilateral donor agencies to assist activities that strengthen national machineries;
• document and publish ‘good practices’; and
• develop and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and qualitative performance indicators to ensure the effective gender sensitive planning, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.

Global policy in the development context
There is a clear convergence of PFA objectives and the need to incorporate gender and good governance more strongly into development strategies around the world. Key multilateral agencies recognise this necessity and it is often reflected in their policy frameworks. For example, the World Bank includes gender analysis in its country assistance strategies, and its ‘comprehensive development framework’ attempts to draw a close link between gender and governance. In Australia, Australian Legal Resource International’s (ALRI; see p.x in this Bulletin) policy on gender and development includes:
• collecting gender-disaggregated information;
• encouraging women counterparts to actively participate in projects at all levels of project design and delivery;
• ensuring women’s access to training and capacity building projects;
• promoting women’s legal literacy;
• creating consultative mechanisms to ensure ongoing communication with and input from women’s groups;
• recognising the important role women often play in informal dispute resolution and negotiations; and
• locating women technical assistants for project delivery, to serve as gender focal points.

Implementing gender and good governance policies
However, it can be difficult to implement such policies. For example, good governance is often used as a loan conditionality by multilateral and bilateral arrangements.2 Development history shows that such conditionality is necessary, but the link between good governance and loan arrangements raises difficulties in incorporating a gendered approach in project implementation:

• Macro-level policies do not reflect day-to-day realities. There is an ongoing separation between issues relating to macroeconomic reform and those relating to the immediate needs of communities. Gender is more readily taken into account in informal dispute resolution and negotiations relating to macroeconomic or public sector reform.

• Projects addressing gender continue to focus on violence against women, primary health and education – which are critical and important, but little connection is made between a gendered
Some of the challenges being faced in ALRI projects include:

- In-country counterparts often identify priorities which mainly respond to loan conditionalities, and thus are of limited scope. Short timelines and a shortage of skilled personnel in-country often result in narrowly defined projects, delivered in the shortest period of time.
- The lack of sensitivity in addressing traditional concerns about the 'male culture of law' worldwide has implications for the provision of legal technical assistance to countries undergoing legal and judicial reform. Many countries, including Australia, are still coming to terms with engendering the law and legal institutions with programmes such as awareness raising for police officers, judges and government officials; legal literacy for women; the criminalisation of violence against women in public and private; and gender equality under the law, including property and land rights, family law and employment. There is a danger that external legal technical assistance can perpetuate and transfer these barriers into situations where women already face significant disadvantage.
- It is difficult to find women legal technical assistants to serve as focal points and mentors, because of the traditional imbalance in legal institutions in most countries.

Some of the challenges being faced in ALRI projects include:

- Women judges attending judicial training workshops continue to be mainly from specialist courts, such as family courts, indicating their overrepresentation in such courts and fewer of them in courts of general jurisdiction.
- In projects relating to court administration, women are largely low-ranking officers. The creation of mechanisms for their advancement through career development and training is seen as an ideal long-term objective but is often met with resistance.
- In numerous projects relating to court congestion, all judges in-country have been male.
- In a legal drafting training project, there is little recognition of the need to ensure that women drafters also have access to this training.
- All except one of the ALRI's judicial consultants have been male. Justice Cathy Branson from the Australian Federal Court provided technical assistance on developing a judicial education plan for the Palestinian Territories and used the opportunity to speak on gender and law to law students at Birzeit University.
- In a judicial restructuring project, there is resistance to the use of affirmative action processes for the advancement of women judges in less traditional areas of law.
- There is a lack of financial and other resources generally and gender-related initiatives are thus relegated to the periphery.
- The unavailability or limited availability of women mentors, because of professional, advocacy and family demands, is a constraint.
- In providing legal drafting assistance on specific bodies of law, there is resistance to considering the implications for women in non-gender specific areas of law, such as corporations law and bankruptcy law.

**Conclusion**

The draft language of Beijing + 5 clearly asserts the need for more accountability and transparency on the part of governments and international institutions. The development policy focus has shifted from gender in the 1980s and early 1990s to good governance. The time is ripe to fully integrate these policy frameworks at a practical level, to decompartmentalise gender projects and incorporate them into the mainstream.

Numerous studies and global policy statements, including the FPA, have highlighted the need to address the disadvantages faced by women as a key strategy in promoting sustainable development. As a first step, a coherent, integrated and coordinated governance and gender strategy needs to be developed across multilateral and bilateral agencies. Donors need to consider gender in broader macroeconomic reform programmes and aim to remove the systemic and institutional barriers faced by women.

Greater efforts have to be made in more effectively integrating the outcomes of key global policies, such as the FPA, at an international level. Increasingly, donor coordination mechanisms are being established in sector specific areas such as legal cooperation, and such fora could be used to exchange information on incorporating gender into sector specific areas at the country level. A cohesive monitoring and evaluation mechanism has to be developed by multilateral and bilateral agencies to assess the effectiveness of gender and governance strategies.

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) has developed a governance strategy following the identification of governance as a priority (Committee to review the Australian overseas aid program 1997). It is noteworthy that AusAID recognises the need to make stronger links between
governance and gender and is in the process of developing such an integrated strategy.

For agencies such as the ALRI, it is important to continue to consult widely in the identification of priorities; to raise awareness of the need to include a gender perspective in macroeconomic reform strategies; to gain a thorough understanding of the gender related legal and judicial reforms taking place in Australia, and the origins of such reforms; to analyse whether such reforms can be modified and translated; and to brief all technical assistants on gender and development concepts.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to John Pace and Hayley Linz for comment, and Johanna Rudd for editorial assistance.

Notes

1. It also recommends that national machineries and other institutional mechanisms: design and promote policies for the advancement of women; catalyse gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes; assist governments in taking specific actions in data gathering and disaggregation; promote research and dissemination of information on women and gender equality; establish documentation centres to disseminate relevant data and other information to promote public dialogue through the media; create and strengthen collaborative links with other agencies at local, regional, national and international levels; establish partnerships with women's organisations, academic institutions and NGOs; engage the media in re-examining gender stereotypes; and create and strengthen collaborative relationships with the private sector, by initiating advocacy dialogue and advising companies to address issues affecting women in the paid labour force and to set up ways and means to promote equality.

2. It is beyond the scope of this discussion to examine this debate (see Orford 1997:443).

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Turner, M. and D. Hulme 1997, Governance, administration and development: Making the state work, Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke.


Gender and governance in international law

Hilary Charlesworth, Centre for International and Public Law, The Australian National University

The International Labor Organization has estimated that, at the present rate of change, it will take 468 years before women and men are represented in equal numbers in national structures of governance. This bleak forecast raises issues of global justice. What does international law have to say about such questions of gender and governance? International law is the legal system developed to regulate relations between states. It deals with issues such as the drawing of land and maritime boundaries between states, the protection of diplomats and the use of force in international relations. International law also establishes various regimes, such as human rights law and environmental law, which affect what states do within their own borders.

Traditional doctrines of international law were long considered to have nothing to do with questions of either gender or governance, nor with the interaction of the two concepts. These matters were considered to be essentially issues of domestic jurisdiction to be dealt with by national legal systems. Over the last quarter of a century, however, the language of both gender and governance has taken on greater significance in international law, although, as I shall argue, their practical impact has been limited.

Gender

The idea of 'gender' is typically understood by international lawyers as a synonym for 'women' and 'sex'. There has been little investigation of the way that images of gender have influenced the development of the processes and substance of international law, as is found, for example, in Carol Cohn's work on strategic studies (1993). Gender comes into focus in international law almost exclusively in the context of sex discrimination. The flagship of the international regime on sex discrimination is the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979. The Convention elaborates the prohibition of sex discrimination in particular contexts, including political life, education and the rural sector.

A major inadequacy in the international law on sex discrimination is its identification of sexual equality with equal treatment of women and men. For example, the rationale of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, and the norm of non-discrimination contained in both the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is to place women in the same position as men in the sphere of public life, such as the workplace and politics. This is also the strategy of CEDAW, although it extends to a limited extent into the 'private' sphere. The activities of the UN Commission on the Status of Women have similarly been informed by such an approach. The problem with this model of equality, as many feminist scholars have pointed out, is that it only offers equality when women and men are in identical positions, and fails to address the underlying causes and consequences of sex discrimination. Institutional practices may not directly discriminate against women, but they can effectively inhibit women's participation by relying on norms reflecting male life patterns as benchmarks of eligibility or success. The fundamental problem for women worldwide is not simply discriminatory treatment compared with men, although this is a manifestation of the larger problem. Women are in an inferior position because they lack real economic, social or political power in both the public and private worlds.

For these reasons, even the comparatively broad definition of discrimination contained in CEDAW may not have much cutting edge against the problems women face. The Convention's endorsement of affirmative action programmes (article 4) similarly assumes that these measures will be temporary techniques to allow women eventually to perform exactly like men.

Governance

The term 'governance' is not found in any of the classic works of international law. In the context of the creation and recognition of new states, international law was concerned with whether a state had a government, but not with the form that government took. The concept of 'governance' has however been employed increasingly by international lawyers. In an influential article, Professor Thomas Franck (1992) argued that there was a duty on all states to govern democratically. Other scholars have suggested that non-democratic governments should be treated as illegitimate by the international community. The idea of 'good governance' has also figured prominently in work on international development, with the elaboration of the link between the achievement of sustainable development and a democratic political system by scholars and international institutions.

Critics of the idea of 'good' or 'democratic' governance argue that the concept tends to be a very limited one. Some have pointed to the focus on the holding of elections as the totem of democracy, without regard to other indicators, such as access to
political office, freedom of the press, wealth distribution and so on. Others have suggested that international ideas of governance are shaped by European and Western perspectives and are not concerned enough with the well-being of the governed. Antony Anghie, for example, has linked concern with the idea of governance with the colonial origins of modern international law. He notes

Governance has been, and continues to be, a discourse which is peculiarly about the non-western world. Whatever the economic and political failures afflicting western societies, international articulated notions of governance are rarely if ever applied to assess or remedy those failures (Anghie 1999:22).

The relationship of the idea of ‘good governance’ to the international law of human rights is also unclear.

**Developing international law**

International law, then, appears to offer a very narrow framework for thinking about the relationship of gender and governance. It prohibits discrimination against women in the context of formal access to the institutions of governance, but it does not clearly deal with structural barriers to such access. It presents governance as a one-dimensional phenomenon, focused on the electoral process. How can these rather limited principles be developed in a more fruitful way?

The imbalance between women and men’s representation in governance should be seen as a question of human rights. The definition of discrimination on the basis of sex in international law encompasses both direct and indirect discrimination against women. In other words, whatever their motive, practices that result in unequal enjoyment of rights by women constitute discrimination. CEDAW makes specific reference to the need to take measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life (article 7). The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which monitors the Convention, has stressed the importance of these provisions and called on states parties to CEDAW to take temporary special measures to ensure that they are complied with.

The claim that the unequal participation of women in political life is an issue of human rights has been strongly contested. For example Fernando Tesón (1993:651-4) has argued that there is an injustice in the under-representation of women in public life only if this phenomenon is the result of states actively preventing women from exercising their right to vote or to stand for public office. Tesón has dismissed the notion that the great imbalance in actual political participation between women and men is in itself a human rights issue. Such an approach assumes that equality means only formally equal treatment and does not take into account the many systemic barriers to women’s participation in governance. These barriers include cultural and religious norms about women’s role and the failure of men to share household and child-rearing tasks.

A deeper question is whether balanced participation of the sexes in international organisations really makes a difference? Evidence of the effects of women’s participation in political decision making is complex. In some cases it appears to have little beneficial impact for women generally. Thus the relatively high participation of women in Nordic politics has not delivered significant change in, for example, the position of women in labour markets. Women politicians are required to operate within male-defined political structures, and whether or not they are appointed to positions on important policy committees may affect their ability to participate in politics. Party politics, for example, can significantly constrain women’s representation in political fora. In her study of women parliamentarians in India, Rai has described the ‘gate-keeping’ functions of political parties which control political agendas. She has concluded that

... institutional constraints, and systems of organisational incentives and disincentives are important explanations of the limited role that women can play in advancing the agenda of gender-justice through party-based political work (Rai 1997:118).

Women politicians are more likely to display allegiance to party platforms than to women’s issues. While women vary in their acknowledgment that they have a ‘women’s’ mandate to fulfill, even those who are so committed are likely to face a conflict between ‘selling out’ their ideals or becoming marginalised within the system.

The claim that women bring different attributes than men to public life also raises some thorny theoretical issues. Arguments for women’s equal participation in decision making based on the special qualities they might bring to the process often rely on the assumption that women have a ‘different voice’ to, and a different way of arriving at moral judgments, than men. These are controversial assertions and may perpetuate myths about women’s nature, rather than developing an understanding of the power relationships that attribute particular characteristics to women. This issue is an example of the tension in much feminist scholarship between regarding gender as an unfixed, socially constructed category on the one hand and privileging the special standpoint of women on the other.

A separate issue is the difficulty of men adequately representing women’s interests, which are not a fixed or stable category. Anne Phillips has argued that

... if women’s interests were transparently obvious to any intelligent observer, there might be no particular case ... for insisting on representatives who also happen to be women (Phillips 1991:15).

She has pointed out that if, on the contrary, women’s interests are ‘varied, unstable, perhaps still in the process of formation’, the separation of the representative from what is to be represented is much more difficult. The imbalance in men’s representation in national and international governmental structures allows male life experiences to be regarded as a general, rather than gendered, category.
Some suggested strategies

What practical strategies can be implemented in order to achieve equal participation of women in governance? Quotas and affirmative action programmes can play a useful role in encouraging women to stand for public office; literacy and education programmes are also significant. Most basically, if the nexus between sex and gender and the division of labour into public and private spheres were broken, if women and men shared household and workplace responsibilities, the conditions for equal political participation would be in place. At the same time, this could make the need for representation of women's interests less significant: the breakdown of the gendered public/private distinction would lead to

... a world in which gender should become less relevant and the abstractions of humanity more meaningful ... [rather than] a world in which women have to speak continuously as women - or men are left to speak as men (Phillips 1991:7).

References


The differential impact of criminal law on males and females in Pacific Island jurisdictions

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Introduction

Among the independent island states of the South Pacific region, a codified approach to criminal law and procedure is favoured. In each jurisdiction, two significant pieces of legislation are the primary sources of law relating to criminal law and procedure. The first takes the form of a crimes act or penal code. This sets out the principal offences in the jurisdiction and the penalties that apply to such offences. It also includes statements of principles relating to issues of criminal capacity, causation, defences, and so on. The second occurs in the form of a criminal procedure code (in some jurisdictions, the nomenclature may differ; for example, in Tonga, the relevant legislation is the Police Act (Cap 35)). These pieces of legislation contain the rules regarding police powers of arrest and detention, bail, and other matters of criminal procedure.

Many of these codes were imposed during the colonial period. They have subsequently been continued in force after each of these countries achieved independence (see further Corrin Care et al. 1999). Essentially, therefore, the backbone of the penal legislation of these countries is a body of law which is over 100 years old and which has been reformed very little in that time. As we know, perceptions of morality and the relative status of women and men have undergone vast transformations in the intervening period. It would seem to be undeniable, therefore, that the criminal laws of the South Pacific region, by virtue of their age if nothing else, are problematic in the way in which they affect women rather than men.

Here, I seek to identify examples of how the construction of the criminal laws in this region has differential impacts on males and females. This exposition can be conducted at two distinct, if interrelated, levels. The first is the textual/philosophical level, which examines how the way in which the law is written encapsulates a gendered conceptualisation of the law or gives rise to the possibility of different treatment. The second is at the more practical level, which considers whether the way in which the law is enforced and administered creates problems for females that may not be faced by males. An obvious and significant area to examine is that of sexual offences and this will form a large part of the discussion. However, there is also some consideration of issues of law and procedure that arise in relation to prostitution and 'domestic violence'.

What the law says ... and what this means

The area of sexual offences is one that provides numerous examples of the language of the criminal law operating in a gendered way, which is often (although not always) disadvantageous to females. It is important to remember that the legal provisions that continue to apply in the region are ones that, until relatively recently, were in force in Western jurisdictions such as Australia and the United Kingdom. There are a number of areas where penal legislation is conceptualised and written in a gendered way: rape and prostitution laws are salient examples.

Rape

Rape is treated as a serious offence in the South Pacific region. In many of the countries, it is listed as an 'offence against morality', and in most it is an indictable offence. However, unlike in other common law jurisdictions (for example, the United Kingdom and Australia), the law relating to the crime of rape is gender-specific in nature. It is defined in terms of a crime that is committed by a man against a woman. For example, in Cook Islands, rape is defined in s.141 of the Crimes Act 1969 in the following terms: '(1) Rape is the act of a male person having sexual intercourse with a woman or girl — (a) Without her consent ...' Similar provisions exist in the criminal legislation of other jurisdictions within the region.

This issue has been the subject of consideration by the Fiji Law Reform Commission (FLRC 1999). Its report on sexual offences states that its proposed reforms to this area of the criminal law are guided by the principles encapsulated in the 1997 Constitution of Fiji Islands and by the obligations arising under two international conventions to which Fiji Islands is a signatory: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by Fiji in 1992) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, ratified by Fiji in 1995). The report comments in relation to rape:

There seems no logical reason today for a gender confining approach to rape. Whether inside or outside a prison environment, there are instances which come to light of rape committed on males. What needs to be focused on is the need to prohibit the act of rape, the gravest sexual offence next to a sexual murder. The law presently would appear to allow for a woman to commit rape on a woman but only by aiding a man to commit the act of rape, the penile penetration of the victim. There seems no reason why women also should not be charged with rape of another woman, even when acting alone (FLRC 1999:15).

Thus, the FLRC has recommended that the offence of rape be formulated in gender-neutral terms in line with the law as it now stands elsewhere, such as in the United Kingdom (s.1 of
the Sexual Offences Act 1956 as amended by s.142 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994), in Australia (for example, s.611 of the Crimes Act 1900 of New South Wales) and in New Zealand (s.128 of the Crimes Act 1961).

In addition, the FLRC has recommended that the definition of rape be extended to cover penetration of bodily orifices other than the vagina. Again, this is a legal development that has already been enacted in other jurisdictions. However, within the region, the definition continues to be limited to penile penetration of the vagina. A further recommendation is that rape should be deemed to include non-penile acts. The report refers to the Fiji Islands case of Muan Melinioba v. R.4 In this case, the victim was raped and subsequently the accused penetrated her vagina with a piece of wood. If the victim had suffered only the non-penile penetration, it would not have been possible to charge the perpetrator with rape. It has long been argued that violation with non-penile objects can be at least as traumatic as penile penetration. This has been recognised by the FLRC (1999:16): 'It is recommended that it should be possible to charge rape for such an act and not leave the prosecution with difficulties over proof of the requisite intent for charging another offence such as act [sic] with intent to cause grievous bodily harm'. This type of approach has been taken in other jurisdictions. However, in the South Pacific region, a limited definition of rape still prevails. Non-penile penetrations would constitute aggravated assaults but not rape.

The issue of consent or, rather, lack of consent in relation to the law of rape is one that raises many concerns. The laws of the countries of the South Pacific region identify rape as sexual intercourse that takes place without the consent of the (female) victim. However, the legislation does not provide any definition of consent or its absence and it has been left to the courts to attempt to make such determinations. This has led in some cases to judicial statements that operate to the disadvantage of victims of rape.

The FLRC report notes a concern over the way in which the courts of the region have defined the lack of consent as something more than a distinction between a person saying 'yes' and a person saying 'no'. It cites the case of R. v. Alfred Saso and others,4 in which the court looked to the level of resistance of the complainant in order to determine whether there was a lack of consent. The report is critical of this sort of judicial approach:

The 'resistance requirement' fails to take into account cultural and social conditions of victims particularly in the Pacific. In many situations, it is easy for the rapist to overpower a child or woman. To expect a female victim, or a child to resist a physically powerful attacker is unrealistic. She may be too frightened to resist and she may have pretended to go along with his violent overtures and to look for a means of escape later. Sometimes too much emphasis is placed on resistance and shouting for help. A court may need to place in a proper perspective such criticisms made by defence counsel. Unfortunately, there is sometimes insufficient appreciation of this factor and the result is that where there is little evidence of resistance or none at all the matter may weigh against the complainant (FLRC 1999:18).

On this basis, the FLRC has recommended that a statutory definition of consent be formulated and it refers to s.38 of the Crimes Act 1958 (Victoria) as a useful model.

Prostitution

As elsewhere, it is not a criminal offence in any of the jurisdictions of the South Pacific region for a person (whether male or female) to have sexual intercourse for payment. However, the law creates several offences which effectively criminalise the means by which sex workers facilitate their activities. Again, it is often the case that such offences are listed in the penal codes as 'offences against morality'. An example is s.168 of the Penal Code of Fiji (Cap 17): 'Loitering or soliciting for the purposes of prostitution'. According to subsections (1) and (2), '(1) Any common prostitute who loiters or solicits in any public place shall be guilty of an offence; (2) Any person who, in any public place, solicits for immoral purposes shall be guilty of an offence'.

It is significant that this provision appears to be framed in gender-neutral terms, although the term 'common prostitute' is not defined in the legislation. This is not the case in legislation that applies elsewhere in the region; often, the law is based on prostitution being a female occupation. So, for example, s.58K of the Crimes Act 1961 of Samoa, which is concerned with brothel-keeping, interprets brothel as 'any house, room, set of rooms, or place of any kind whatever used for the purposes of prostitution, whether by one woman or more' (emphasis added). Similarly, s.162 of the Crimes Act 1969 of Cook Islands, which creates the offence of 'procuring sexual intercourse', is written in such a way as to criminalise the procuring of females for sex but not the procuring of males.

The law relating to prostitution was also a focus of concern for the FLRC and this part of its report has recently sparked controversy in the Fiji Islands' media. In line with trends elsewhere, the FLRC has taken the view that it is impossible to eradicate prostitution as a social phenomenon. Rather than using the blunt instrument of the criminal law to attempt the impossible, it is more socially beneficial to regulate it in order to promote public health and to protect vulnerable members of society, particularly children. The FLRC has recommended that prostitution and associated offences, such as living on the earnings of prostitution, be decriminalised. The report notes that the policing of prostitution or 'commercial sex work' is problematic and ineffective:

The CSW [commercial sex worker] would be arrested, spend the night in the cell and upon going to Court, magistrates themselves often took a sympathetic line with CSWs and exercised their discretion to release them or order acquittal. The view of one of the policemen was that 'these females are really doing no harm to anybody compared to those who break and enter, who really give trouble and we have to be on the lookout or it will be a waste of time to go after these girls' (FLRC 1999:74).

The FLRC has recommended that commercial sex work be decriminalised and instead be subject to a system of regulation and licensing to prevent the industry becoming a vehicle for public nuisance (such as persistent loitering and soliciting in
residential areas) or criminal activity (such as 'old men being tricked out of their wallets and no services provided' (FLRC 1999:79)). It is interesting, in light of the recent controversy over this issue, to note that in a poll conducted in 1997 by the *Fiji Times*, referred to in the FLRC report, the majority of respondents (68 per cent) were opposed to the idea of legalising prostitution.

This aspect of the report has provoked a great deal of criticism from church leaders in Fiji. The president of the Methodist Church was reported in the *Fiji Sun* (16 January 2000) as saying, 'It [prostitution] is wrong according to our scriptures and ideology. Our scriptures say that we must have family life but prostitution does not support family life. This is one of the problems that the Western society's bringing in'. Similar views have been expressed by spokespersons for the Salvation Army, the then India Sanmarga Ikya Sangam Hindu organisation and the Fiji Muslim League. On the other hand, the vice-president of the Sanatam Dharam Pratindhi Sabha has argued that prostitution should be legalised in the interests of 'night traders'. The commissioner who authored the FLRC report, Justice Anthony Gates, has responded to critics by calling on the churches to lead the community in demonstrating 'compassion' towards those involved in commercial sex work. Justice Gates has called for an in-depth study of community attitudes on issues associated with prostitution. He has maintained his position that prostitution as a social phenomenon cannot be eliminated, whether through the operation of the criminal justice system or any other means.

How the system works ... or doesn't

In many countries of the South Pacific region, it is a concern that women are disadvantaged by the operation of the criminal justice system. It continues to be the case that they are more likely to be involved with the system in the role of victim than of accused. This is particularly so in relation to sexual offences, but it is also true of 'domestic violence' which is endemic throughout the region.

One of the most significant problems faced by women who are victims of 'domestic violence' is getting the police to treat what has happened as something requiring their attention and action. The policing of 'domestic violence' is one area in which the policing organisations of the region are glaringly deficient. Although the current criminal legislation of the countries of the South Pacific region is sufficient to encompass domestic assaults, police officers still fail to deal adequately with the problem. Furthermore, they receive little or no specific training to equip them with the necessary skills and strategies. They may handle reports informally, either by talking to the parties concerned or by referring the matter to be dealt with by a chief or other community elder, including church ministers. It is questionable whether such an approach is fully appropriate, for two reasons. One is that the police forces of the region tend to have very few women officers. For example, in Marshall Islands in 1998, 4 per cent of police officers were women. Tonga has probably one of the largest proportions (18 per cent in 1998). The other reason is that patriarchal structures that prevail in the traditional societies of the region and the churches may not necessarily be conducive to women taking the criminal justice route for dealing with domestic assaults if this is what they choose to do (Jowitt 2000).

Elsewhere in the criminal justice system, different attitudes may prevail. In Vanuatu, the Public Prosecutor's Office (currently headed by a woman) has a policy that, once a complaint of 'domestic violence' has been received in the office, the case will not be dropped even if the complainant requests that it should be. This is because the Public Prosecutor feels that often women are forced or coerced to reconcile in custom with their partners and that has led to men becoming victims of homicide at the hands of persons against whom previous complaints had first been made and then withdrawn. However, in the absence of initial support from the police, it will remain the case that many incidents of 'domestic violence' will not reach the Public Prosecutor. The legislation in several of the countries (for example, Fiji Islands, Vanuatu) includes provisions that seek to promote customary reconciliation (for example, Fiji Islands' Criminal Procedure Code (Cap 21) s.163). However, where these provisions exist, they do not make any reference to offences that would qualify for settlement by way of reconciliation in terms of the nature of the offences and/or the sentences they attract but which should be excluded from the ambit of such provisions by virtue of their social significance. Incidents of 'domestic violence' are very clearly in such a category.

The reform question

Generally, in the region, law reform issues are not accorded a very high priority. Many of the countries do not have a dedicated law reform body or, if such a body exists, it produces very little. A notable exception is the Fiji Law Reform Commission. The most likely reason for the lack of this type of activity is limited resources. Across the region, several aspects of the public sector, including legal services, survive only because of the injection of significant amounts of aid, notably from Australia and New Zealand.

However, there are examples of reform initiatives aimed at equalising the position of women and men in many areas of law and social policy, including criminal law and justice. Reference has already been made to some of the proposals put forward by the FLRC. In December 1999, a Samoan lawyer called for the country's rape laws to be reformed so that women who are raped by their husbands are able to file charges against them. As the law currently stands in Samoa (as well as in several other Pacific Island states), the offence of rape can only be committed against a person 'to whom he (the offender) is not married'. The FLRC advocates a similar reform in its report. In Vanuatu in 1999, the Family Protection Bill was prepared by the State Law Office after extensive consultation with women's groups, chiefs and other community leaders and representatives. One of its principal aims is to provide mechanisms for women to protect themselves and their children from abuse and violence in the home. This draft legislation has yet to be considered by the parliament.
As can be seen from the recent public controversy in Fiji, proposals for reforming the laws on prostitution have the potential to be extremely problematic. Attempts to introduce similar reforms in other Pacific Island countries are likely to generate similar controversies. Churches and other religious groups are extremely influential in the region. Also, in the realm of sexual offences, a combination of religious teaching and customary taboos can often lead to communities denying that such issues are relevant to them. All of these factors indicate that the process of reform in this area of law is likely to be long and fraught with many difficulties. However, in light of the increased participation of these countries in trans-global activities, including the ratification of international treaties and directives such as CEDAW, it seems undeniable that law reform must be undertaken sooner rather than later.

Conclusion

As can be seen from this brief consideration, the criminal justice arena is another locus in which the structure, enforcement and application of the law can operate differentially depending on gender. It is not surprising, given the longstanding dominance of law making, teaching, enforcing and interpreting by males, that this differential impact is disadvantageous to women more often than it is to men. This is true in the countries of the South Pacific region, just as it was previously and often continues to be in other parts of the world. What is evident from the dual approach that has been taken here is that attempts to rectify this imbalance must go beyond simply changing the words that the law uses in order to replace gender-specific terms, such as 'wife', with those that are considered more gender-neutral, such as 'spouse'. Indeed, this type of linguistic reform has already been undertaken in Solomon Islands. But this is a first step which, while being significant in symbolic terms, is unlikely to be meaningful otherwise. Beyond this, law reformers need to examine conceptualisations of the relative positions of women and men that are promulgated in penal legislation, policing and prosecutorial decisions, court procedures and judicial determinations. And, at the practical level, those responsible for the enforcement and application of the criminal law need to look to recruitment policies, training programmes and work practices to identify and then address issues of bias, prejudice and discrimination, whether on the basis of gender or some other characteristic.

Notes

1. For example, Penal Code of Fiji Islands (Cap 17); Crimes Act 1969 of Cook Islands.
2. An exception is the Penal Code of Vanuatu (Cap 135) which was enacted by Vanuatu in 1981, following independence in 1980.

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FLRC (Fiji Law Reform Commission) 1999, Reform of the penal code and criminal procedure code: The sexual offences report, FLRC, Suva.
Gender discrimination: A review of legislation in Vanuatu

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Introduction

A review of the legislation of Vanuatu was undertaken at the Emalus Campus of the University of the South Pacific, in Port Vila, over a period of three weeks in December 1999. The initiative for the review came from the Office of the Ombudsman and was undertaken as part of a Good Governance Project of VANWIP (Vanuatu Women in Politics, a branch of the Vanuatu National Council of Women). The review was commissioned as part of a wider programme focusing on governance and accountability in Vanuatu, sponsored by the United Nations. It was undertaken by two Ni-Vanuatu law graduates of the University of the South Pacific, Betty Zinner-Toa and Velma Wano, under the author’s supervision.

The purpose of the review was to identify legislation which contained provisions which were either directly or indirectly gender discriminatory, so that future recommendations could be made to propose changes or reforms to legislation.

At the outset it was recognised that such a review would not necessarily identify all forms of gender discrimination in the laws of Vanuatu, or in the application of such laws. This is partly because legislation reflects only part of the total legal picture, and also because law on paper and law in practice can be two very different things. It was also recognised that redrafting legislation, while a positive move, would be unlikely to remedy gender discrimination because such discrimination stems from something more than the way laws are drafted. The findings endorse this view. The review was, therefore, seen as a very small, although important, step in dealing with gender discrimination.

The review

The Constitution of the Republic of Vanuatu provides for equal treatment under the law and for entitlement to the fundamental freedoms set out under the Constitution without discrimination on the grounds of, among other things, sex (s.5(1)). The Constitution also provides that no laws which make provision for the ‘special benefit, welfare, protection or advancement of females, child and young persons, members of under-privileged groups or inhabitants of less developed areas’ (s.5(1)(k)) shall be deemed to be inconsistent with equal treatment.

All legislation in force on 23 November 1999 was reviewed to see if it complied with the principles of equal treatment, and if it appeared not to, why this was so. The main areas in which discrimination on the basis of gender was found to exist were:

- marriage and the family; citizenship and nationality;
- employment and labour; and sexual offences.

Marriage and family

Legislation found to be discriminatory under this heading included the Control of Marriage Act (CAP 45); the Maintenance of Children Act (CAP 46); the Maintenance of Family Act (CAP 42); and the Matrimonial Causes Act (CAP 192).

The law of marriage establishes different ages for males and females, the latter being 16 years and the former, 18 years – which is the age of majority. In a society where family involvement in marriage is still common, this means that at present females are of marriageable age before they reach the age of majority. Their legal incapacity to contract seems to be ignored for the purposes of marriage.

Moreover, where a person wishes to be married according to custom, the choice appears to be that of the man, who must fulfil the premarital requirements. This provision in the Marriage Act (CAP 60) may be misleading in as much as customary marriages are likely to involve both families, if not wider kin groups. It should also be noted that many customs relating to marriage are not controlled by legislation and that discriminatory practices would not emerge from a review of this sort.

Where a marriage is entered into, under the Matrimonial Causes Act, it may be declared voidable if the wife was, at the time of the marriage, pregnant by someone other than the (husband) petitioner. This provision only affects women. Provided the husband was unaware of the pregnancy at the time of the marriage and provided he refrains from sexual intercourse with his wife once the discovery is made, a decree of nullity may be granted. In a society where premarital sex is not unusual, this provision seems to take a one-sided view of sexual fidelity. It should also be pointed out that DNA testing or other scientific methods of establishing paternity are not available in Vanuatu.

The grounds for terminating a marriage are equal as far as desertion or continuous absence is concerned, but only a wife may petition for divorce on the grounds of her husband’s conviction for rape or other unnatural offences. Unnatural sexual acts of women are not considered.

Differential sexual mores are also apparent in the provisions of the Maintenance of Children Act, where a claim for maintenance for children will not be available if there is evidence ‘that during the normal period of conception the mother was of
a notorious loose behaviour' (s.4(a)). Not only does this punish
the children of women labelled in this way but, also, the lack of
any reference to loose male behaviour means that only the
behaviour of women is sanctioned.

While most societies make provision for establishing
legitimacy for succession to title, particularly to land, certain
rights and titles also pass matrilineally. Customary adoption of
children is also recognised. Nevertheless, the current state of
legislation suggests a patriarchal structure in which paternity is
all-important.

This emphasis on the ascendancy of males can be a
disadvantage, especially when viewed against some of the
material changes taking place in Vanuatu. For example, under
the Maintenance of Family Act, only men have to pay
maintenance for their children or alimony to their spouse,
although a mother may be fined or imprisoned for deserting
her children. There is, therefore, no indication that the financial
responsibilities of the joint household or upbringing of children
should be shared, or that the parent who is earning - who may
in some cases be the mother rather than the father - should
pay. Actual care is clearly the responsibility of the mother, even
if she is not earning or receiving maintenance. Traditionally,
this might not cause problems, but these days children do not
just require food from the gardens but also school fees, books
and clothes. Women may be better able to find paid
employment, even if it is relatively unskilled. Moreover, more
women are receiving education and are therefore able to move
into paid employment. The current legislation does not reflect
these changes or accommodate the possibility of considering
the earnings of both partners to a marriage.

Citizenship and nationality

Discrimination in the operation of the laws relating to citizenship
was the subject of a public report published in May 1999 by
the Office of the Ombudsman.

Under the Citizenship Act, rights to citizenship are
determined according to gender and marital status. A woman
married to a Ni-Vanuatu man is entitled to apply for Vanuatu
citizenship. The converse does not apply, so the only way a man
who is not a citizen can become one is after fulfilling a residency
requirement of ten years. Adopted children who are not citizens
may regain that citizenship on the breakdown of her marriage.

Where a male applicant becomes a citizen by naturalisation,
his wife or any children are automatically entitled to citizenship,
although the wife must indicate in writing that she wishes to do
so. A woman who becomes a citizen through naturalisation does
not confer a similar automatic right on her husband and
children. On the other hand, a woman who gives up her Ni-
Vanuatu citizenship on marriage to a citizen of another country
may regain that citizenship on the breakdown of her marriage.

In a region where movement between different Pacific
countries is a regular feature – for example, for education or
employment – citizenship rights are important. They confer a
number of benefits denied to non-citizens. Discrimination in
the conferment of citizenship necessarily means discrimination in
other indirect ways.

Employment and labour

Under the Employment Act (CAP 112), there are provisions
which discriminate against women by prohibiting them from
employment in certain sectors or at night. These provisions are
no doubt intended for the better protection of women and, as
such, may fall within the permitted exceptions to the equal
treatment principles of the Constitution. However, such
provisions can also have a negative impact on the employability
of women and the employment opportunities open to them.
These provisions are also contrary to Article 11.1(c) of the
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
Against Women (CEDAW) – to which Vanuatu is a signatory
– which states that women should have 'a free choice of
profession and employment' (11.1(c)).

The other area in which discriminatory measures apply to
women in employment is with regard to maternity leave.
Inevitably, maternity leave is discriminatory in as much as it
can only apply to women. However, under the provisions for
annual leave in s.29(1) of the Employment Act, maternity leave
is listed along with absence due to accident or illness as being a
period counting towards continuous employment for annual
leave entitlement purposes. Moreover, maternity is also listed
under sick leave under s.36 which prohibits an employer from
permitting a woman to work six weeks prior to or six weeks
after her confinement. While the analogy with sick leave is itself
open to debate, the further problem is that a woman on sick/
maternity leave is only entitled to be paid less than half of the
remuneration she would have been entitled to had she not been
absent. This is despite the fact that her absence on the grounds
of pregnancy is counted as being continuous employment.
Legally, her maternity leave should be on full pay. There is no
indication that men who are absent from work for sickness
reasons are only paid less than half pay. There are also no
provisions regarding job security, so that a woman who breaks
off employment to have a baby may well find that she has no
job to come back to.

One positive aspect of the employment legislation is that it
does allow women to nurse a child for half-an-hour twice a day
during her working hours, and such time can be counted as
working hours.

Where an employee is accompanied to his place of
employment by his family, if he is repatriated or dies while
working away from his homeland, he and his family will be
repatriated (s.59). The expression 'family' is specified as meaning
the wife and dependent minor children of the employee. There
is no provision for the repatriation of the minor children and/
or spouse of a female employee in similar circumstances.
Sexual offences

The law relating to sexual offences in Vanuatu is still firmly based on heterosexual intercourse, in which the victim is generally female and the perpetrator, male. The definition of rape, for example, is still gender specific and focuses on the lack of consent of the woman and penetration by the man. Failure to prove either will result in acquittal.

There is, however, clearly a perceived need to protect women from sexual violence. The law against abduction mentions only females (s.92), as does the law against intercourse with a girl under care or protection (s.96) and the law against unlawful sexual intercourse which refers only to under-age girls.

Conclusion

The areas in which discrimination was found to exist are not dissimilar to those that have been highlighted, and in many cases addressed, in other legal systems. Most of the examples of discrimination found in the legislation were against women, although not all. Some of this could be quite easily changed by minor drafting amendments, or by cross-reference to the Interpretation Act which provides that 'words and expressions importing the masculine gender shall include the feminine and vice versa' (s.3(2)).

However, as might have been anticipated, gender discrimination is particularly apparent in those areas of the law which deal with the family, personal status, and sexual behaviour. These are complex and controversial areas which are not easy to reform. There is, moreover, the exception – allowed by the Constitution – that protective or special benefit laws affecting women are not contrary to the equal treatment principle.

While both the Constitution of Vanuatu and its commitments under international treaties such as the CEDAW reflect acceptance of policies of non-discrimination, particularly against women, how this is to be brought about creates difficult challenges for a society where introduced ideals and values exist alongside and compete with traditional ones.

The findings of the review (which are public but unpublished) have been submitted to a workshop to be attended by delegates drawn from many different sectors. Recommendations, with various drafting suggestions, will then be put before Parliament for reforming the law. What these recommendations will be remains to be seen. Certainly, it can be anticipated that there will be those who are opposed to change, especially if those changes go to the very heart of social structures, traditional gender based roles, and long-held views on the acceptable behaviour of men and women.
Customary law and women's rights in Solomon Islands

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Background

Solomon Islands is made up of several hundred islands, spread out over a sea area of approximately 1,340,000 square kilometres. The social structure of the country is extremely complex. Culture and social organisation vary from island to island, and even from village to village. The official languages are English and Pidgin, but there are also about 65 vernacular languages and dialects.

Solomon Islands became independent in 1978 (having been a British Protectorate since 1893), with a constitution brought into force by the British Privy Council. This constitution incorporates international human rights (Chapter II), and also promotes local values by giving formal recognition to customary law. This law had continued to operate in traditional parts of society throughout the 'colonial' period. Little attention appears to have been paid to the fact that human rights (particularly women's rights) and customary law embrace very different ideals. Customary law is based on male domination (see Brown and Corrin Care 1998), and even in those parts of the Solomon Islands where title to land descends through matrilineal lines, land disputes are generally litigated by men. Human rights, on the other hand, are founded on principles of equality. The constitution is thus a vehicle for two competing notions. Like many other small Pacific Island countries, Solomon Islands faces the challenge of reconciling the two.

There is some guidance in the constitution as to the relative weight to be given to its provisions and to customary law generally. Section 2 declares the constitution to be the supreme law. More particularly, schedule 3 states that customary law will not apply if it is inconsistent with the constitution. On the other hand, the anti-discrimination section in Chapter II provides a number of exceptions to the right of protection, including those relating directly and indirectly to customary law. Further, inconsistency is often a matter of opinion. As in other countries, doubtful cases must be decided by the courts, taking into account the context not only of the constitution but also of Solomon Islands generally.

Constitutional provisions

Anti-discrimination

The Constitution of Solomon Islands incorporates a bill of rights, based on the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and the European Communities' European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms made in 1953. The preamble pledges to 'uphold the principles of equality'. This is given substantive force in s.15, which provides:

(1) Subject to the provisions of subsections (5), (6), and (9) of this section, no law shall make any provision that is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect.

(2) Subject to the provisions of subsections (7), (8), and (9) of this section, no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person acting by virtue of any written law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority...

(4) In this section, the expression 'discriminatory' means affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by race, place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed or sex whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not accorded to persons of another description.

The width of protection in s.15 is also restricted by s.15(5), which contains seven paragraphs exempting certain categories of laws from the discrimination provisions. Section 15(5)(f) permits positive discrimination by stating that s.15(1) shall not apply to laws for the advancement of the more disadvantaged members of society. Paragraph (g) follows on from this by allowing special laws to be made for disadvantaged groups, whether advantageous or not, provided they are justifiable in a democratic society. Paragraph (a) exempts tax and revenue laws; paragraph (b) exempts laws relating to non-citizens; paragraph (c) exempts personal laws, such as laws relating to marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance; and paragraph (e) exempts land laws. Paragraph (d) provides that nothing in any law shall be held to be discriminatory to the extent that it makes provision for the 'application of customary law'. This restriction is open to different interpretations, which are discussed further below.

Customary law

The recognition of customary law as a source of law within the formal system shows respect for customary law at national level. This aim is reflected in the preamble, which commences by stressing pride in the 'worthy customs' of Solomon Islands people. Recognition is also an attempt to integrate customary law into the formal system. Section 75 states:

(1) Parliament shall make provision for the application of laws, including customary laws.

(2) In making provision under this section, Parliament shall have particular regard to the...
customary law in para. 3, which provides:

(1) Subject to this paragraph, customary law shall have effect as part of the law of Solomon Islands.

(2) The preceding subparagraph shall not apply in respect of any customary law that is, and to the extent that it is, inconsistent with this Constitution or an Act of Parliament.

Paragraph 3(2) of schedule 3 makes it clear that customary law is not to be applied if it is inconsistent with the constitution or a statute. This is also the implication from s.2, which provides: 'This Constitution is the supreme law of Solomon Islands and if any other law is inconsistent with this Constitution, that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void.' Accordingly, a customary law that is inconsistent with constitutionally protected human rights will be void, unless within one of the stated exceptions, for example those in s.15(5).

Paragraph 3 goes on to empower parliament to take the matter further:

(3) An Act of Parliament may: –

(a) provide for the proof and pleading of customary law for any purpose;
(b) regulate the manner in which or the purposes for which customary law may be recognised; and
(c) provide for the resolution of conflicts of customary law.

Unfortunately, parliament has not exercised its powers under paragraph (3)(c). Progress with regard to sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) has not fared much better. Although the Solomon Islands Minister for Justice circulated the first draft of the Customs Recognition Bill for comment in 1993, no further action was taken on it until 1995 when a second draft was issued. The 1995 bill has still not been enacted.

Case law

In the case of The Minister for Provincial Government v Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly, the Court of Appeal of Solomon Islands was called on to consider whether the Provincial Government Act 1996 was unconstitutional. This Act repealed the Provincial Government Act 1981, under which Provincial Assembly members were elected democratically. Under the 1996 Act, members were indirectly elected by Area Assemblies which consisted of 50 per cent elected members and 50 per cent non-elected chiefs and elders. As only males could be 'traditional chiefs', half of the members of an Area Assembly had to be male. This effectively denied females equal opportunity. While the point does not appear to have been pleaded or argued, the court considered its implications. It concluded that, as s.114(2)(b) mandated parliament to 'consider the role of traditional chiefs in the provinces', it had been recognised that 'traditional chiefs' should play a role in government at provincial level. The discrimination that would remain until the role of 'traditional chiefs' under the constitution was re-evaluated had, according to the court, been accepted in the constitution itself. Goldborough JA stated:

Parliament has made provision for provincial government. It was required to do so [under s.114]. It has considered, as required, the role of traditional chiefs. Indeed it has decided to enhance their role, as compared to the repealed legislation. In this regard it is clear that women at present may be disadvantaged, given that traditional chiefs are male. This I conclude cannot be said to offend against the constitution. It is a required consideration by the same constitution.

Unfortunately, their Lordships failed to consider the power conferred by s.114 in the context of the right to protection from discrimination contained in s.15. Of course, even if they had done so, there is still the stumbling block of s.15(5)(d). As stated above, this exempts laws providing 'for the application of customary law' from the protection given by s.15(1). However, the potential width of this exemption is limited when it is read in the context of s.75(1), which directs parliament to 'make provision for the application of laws, including customary laws'. The question then arises: is subsection (5)(d) designed to exempt all customary laws from the protection of s.15(1), or only those laws that govern the application of customary law, such as the Customs Recognition Bill 1995? The second interpretation appears more likely, particularly in light of the pledge in the preamble to support equality. If this is correct, the exemption is aimed at protecting laws specifying how, when and to whom customary law should apply, which might otherwise be unconstitutional because they only apply to certain parts of the community. On this interpretation, the Provincial Government Act 1996 should not have been upheld, as it is not such a law.

A similar question arose for consideration in Tanavulu & Tanavulu v Tanavulu and SINPF? There, the court had to consider customary inheritance for the purpose of the Solomon Islands National Provident Fund Act. That Act provides that, if a member of the fund dies without nominating a beneficiary for their accumulated funds, distribution is to be in accordance with the custom of the member, 'to the children, spouse and other persons' entitled in custom (s.33(c)). No provision is made as to how this custom is established. In this particular case, the deceased had nominated his brother and nephew as beneficiaries when he joined the fund. As provided by s.32 of the Act, that nomination became void when he married the following year. After he died, his father applied for and was paid the amount held in the fund on the basis of custom in Babatana, South Choiseul. Of the $11,079 paid to him, the father deposited $4,000 in an interest-bearing deposit account in the name of the deceased's son. He used $3,000 to meet funeral expenses and paid $2,000 each to the deceased's brother and nephew. Seventy-nine dollars was used for his own purposes. The deceased's widow challenged this distribution, seeking a declaration in the High Court that she and her infant child were each entitled to a third share of the money. The evidence in the case showed that inheritance in the deceased's tribe was patrilineal and that the deceased's father was entitled to distribute the estate to relatives. According to customary law, the deceased's father had the discretion to pay some amount of the inheritance to the widow, but in some circumstances, for example as where she had left the father's house, he was entitled to leave her out of the distribution altogether.

March 2000
Most of the argument concentrated on the proper interpretation of s.33(c). However, it was also argued for the widow that customary law that was discriminatory was unconstitutional. At first instance, the judge found that the word 'law' in s.15(1) did not include customary law. His basis for this finding was that the section was referring to a law to be made in the future and customary law was not such a law. Rather, it was 'evolving or was already pertaining at the time of the adoption of the Constitution'. This interpretation puts customary law outside the protection of s.15 for all purposes. However, it is open to question. While the word 'shall' may generally be used to denote indefinite future time, it is used by legislative drafters to denote an obligation (see Thornton 1987:90). In a negative phrase such as 'no law shall', it means 'a law must not ...'. His Lordship went on to say that discriminatory customary law would not be protected by the section in any event, because he considered that ss.15(5)(c) and 15(5)(d) excused discriminatory law in a case such as this.

Section 15(5)(c) exempts law, inter alia, 'with respect to devolution of property on death'. Arguably the distribution of funds under the National Provident Fund Act would not be covered by this, as the Act takes entitlements from the fund out of a deceased's estate for testamentary purposes. The contrary interpretation of s.15(5)(d) has already been discussed above.

The Court of Appeal upheld the first instance decision and limited their consideration of the conflict between customary law and protection from discrimination to the following words:

The Constitution (s.15(5) and cl. 3 of Schedule 3) recognises the importance of customary law to citizens of the Solomon Islands. The former provision recognises that the application of customary law may have certain discriminatory consequences. The learned trial judge was correct in holding that the Act was not unconstitutional because s.36(c) discriminated against the widow.

The practical effect of both these decisions was to perpetuate discrimination founded on customary law and practice.

Conclusion

There are insufficient decisions involving resolution of conflict between customary law and anti-discrimination provisions to make any accurate predictions for the future. However, it is apparent that the values encapsulated in s.15(1) to (4) are often diametrically opposed to the values underlying customary law in Solomon Islands. The failure of the Solomon Islands Constitution to address this conflict may be attributed an assumption by the traditional Solomon Islands societies are founded on community foundations of customary society. A gradual approach to the introduction of change from within the boundaries of that society may have a greater chance of long-term success.

There is no doubt that successful resolution of the conflict between customary law and human rights in Solomon Islands requires recognition and understanding of the different cultural perspectives in which they operate. The debate on human rights is finally being expanded outside its former geographical and philosophical boundaries (see, for example, Tomas and Haruru 1999). This may provide an opportunity for human rights to be redefined in a South Pacific context. At the same time, legal education within the region has expanded to include undergraduate and postgraduate study of customary law. Armed with this knowledge and without preconceived notions of the superiority of Western law, the next generation of South Pacific lawyers may be better equipped to grapple with the conflict between customary law and human rights.

Notes

1. The present population is about 328,723 (1991 Government Census). Of these, about 93.4 per cent are Melanesian, 4 per cent Polynesian, 1.4 per cent Micronesian, 0.7 per cent European and 0.2 per cent Chinese.

2. Acknowledgement is due to Prof. J. Lynch and Dr R. Early of the Pacific Language Unit, University of the South Pacific (USP), who supplied this information.


4. Customary law was encouraged during the Protectorate era as a means of social control; for example, Native Courts Ordinance 1942 (Solomon Islands).

5. See, for example, Maurna v Kahanaiarau [1983] SILR 95. The same applies in other Melanesian countries; for example, 'Submission by the Fiji women's rights movement and the crisis centre', Report of the Committee of Inquiry on the Courts, Fiji Islands, which states that 'tradition, culture and custom in the main is defined by men, not women – therefore there is a conflict about whose custom is being applied' (1984:172).


8. For an example of conflict between customary law and the right to life enshrined in s.4 of the constitution, see Loumia v DPP [1985/6] SILR 158.

9. See also Remisio Pasi v James Leni and Others, unreported, High Court, Solomon Islands, cc 218/1995, 14 February 1997, where customary law was upheld in the face of a challenge on the basis of infringement of the right to freedom of movement and various other rights.

10. In a recent informal survey of final-year law students at USP, only 6 out of 33 students considered that women's human rights should override customary law. About 40 per cent of those students were women.

11. The School of Law at USP offers an LLB and postgraduate degrees, which include courses on customary law.

References


Gender and the reform process in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands

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Both Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have experienced a major change in government during the last three years. The introduction of reform programmes has been a significant feature of these new governments, with an emphasis on the development of 'good governance'. Current policy statements do reveal a clear commitment to addressing gender issues and gender inequality. This commitment has been identified as one of the components of what is deemed to be good governance and it has been stated that it is essential to the reform process. However, the success of effective policy implementation depends not only upon its delivery but also on the commitment of funds and personnel to programme and project development. Greater gender awareness and understanding will rely, particularly in these two countries, upon the development of a closer relationship between government and non government organisation (NGO) sectors. Unless the gap between them is addressed and a coordinated approach developed, a change in both community and government awareness and practice is unlikely to occur successfully. This critical link between good governance, sound policy and community action has been noted:

The many difficulties that governments face in ensuring that these fundamental opportunities are available to all people have regularly been catalogued. Yet recent research into development processes has concluded that resources per se have less impact on development outcomes than do political resolve and sound policy and programmes (UNDP 1999:92).

Data gathering

There has been a growing awareness and acknowledgement that there is considerable gender inequity, particularly in the areas of health and education, in the South Pacific region. There has also been a steady development of research in this field, although the collection of essential data has been rather challenging. As noted in the Pacific human development report 1999, at this stage neither the gender-related development index (GDI) nor the gender empowerment measure (GEM) can be used to gauge gender inequality and disparities in economic and political decision making, because of a lack of gender-disaggregated data. The dearth of reliable and official data available to the governments of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, a feature common to many other countries in the region, has resulted in the formulation of policy based on information that requires considerable expansion and verification. Generally, the understanding of gender differences has been drawn from the limited data available on school enrolments, adult literacy levels, and life expectancy and birth rates. Significantly, there has been some input from the community sector, combined with lobbying and advocacy from particular government departments with a commitment to gender issues, to the formulation of current policy documents addressing gender concerns in both countries.

Policy planning and implementation

The main activity around gender issues in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands has traditionally occurred in the non government sector. NGOs and community groups have made practical attempts to address gender inequality. The NGOs have also functioned as significant lobby groups in calling for change and for the development of policy on gender issues. Women's groups and organisations are mainly located in the community sector. Until the introduction of the reform programmes, the track record of both governments in tackling gender issues was rather poor. Overall, there has been little commitment to funding and organising programmes to redress gender inequality, and specifically to promoting and developing programmes and policies addressing women's needs.

The Solomon Islands Government, for example, is yet to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The efforts of the Women and Development Division (WDD) in policy and programme delivery have been characterised by a lack of funding, a reliance upon overseas aid, and inadequate staffing levels. The national women's policy was finally accepted by the parliament in October 1998 after a frustrating five-year history of rejection and procrastination. Although there are now clear guidelines for addressing gender inequality through government policy, such as the following aims (Solomon Islands Government 1998), the problem of the level of commitment and support for their effective implementation remains.

The aims of the WDD are to:

- Promote an increased and more effective role for women in decision making in national development.
- Improve the availability and circulation of information and resources relating to the welfare of women and families.
- Facilitate women's training programmes to develop appropriate knowledge and skills for women and to improve their participation in development.
Further, there is now recognition that contradictions exist between policy and practice. There is an awareness that effective action is needed to address this issue within the bureaucracy:

The present level of human resources in this Division is inadequate to: (a) gather and compile a baseline data base on women which is absolutely essential to plan any work in this area (b) formulate policies, programmes and projects relating to women and (c) implement and monitor the policies, programmes and projects planned. Another constraint is that women are currently underrepresented at all levels of decision making (Solomon Islands Government 1999:44).

Like Solomon Islands, Vanuatu has a history of poor commitment to gender issues, such as minimal staffing of the women's division and a lack of delivery of specific programmes and policies. A major change has occurred, however, with the development of policy which is clearly committed to addressing gender inequalities. In the Comprehensive Reform Program (CRP) document, there is recognition, for example, that there is an absence of women in decision making at all levels. There is also some acknowledgement of the impact of traditional gender relations and the CRP provides an outline of policy and strategies to address this situation, although there is minimal discussion of how to promote attitudinal change. A gap exists between the rhetoric of policy and programme development and the reality of entrenched traditional attitudes and lifestyle. The following key statement in the CRP provides an insight into traditional attitudes but does not appear to be linked to any discussion or analysis of the need for change:

Ni-Vanuatu women are generally not considered to be equal to men in customary or contemporary society and are not generally expected or encouraged to participate in decision-making in the family, the community or government (Vanuatu Government 1997:Attachment D).

Reform changes

In Vanuatu, some positive changes have occurred at government level, such as the appointment of a gender equity officer, the introduction of a programme of awareness raising on gender issues and some training in gender and development for government personnel, as well as the introduction of a microcredit scheme for women, based on the Grameen Bank model and known as the VANWODS Project. Also, the CRP policy documents state that the following policies and actions are 'central' to the reform process:

- Incorporation of gender awareness and gender analysis into policy making at all levels.
- Introduction of a strong gender dimension into the collection and analysis of statistics.
- Review of all legislation to ensure gender neutrality.
- Incorporation of gender awareness education into government and donor-sponsored community activities on natural resource management and human resource development.
- Development of policy and legislation on violence against women and children.
- Appointment of a planner with specific responsibility for gender policies and programmes.
- Creation of a working group to coordinate and monitor the above.

It would appear that recent policy formulation in Vanuatu on gender issues is principally government driven and, although consultation with the community has occurred, there is a level of criticism, particularly from the NGO sector, that this process has not been inclusive or extensive enough. Among the women's organisations, there has been some scepticism concerning what has been perceived as a male-dominated policy change, without enough reference to, or consultation with, women from all sectors of society and it is indicative of ongoing traditional male-dominated decision making.

Another assessment of the formulation of gender policy and its integration into the planning process for both Vanuatu and Solomon Islands has been that it is determined or influenced by international pressure and the agenda of aid donors. One view from the Solomon Islands is that

the integration of gender in the government process has been determined largely by two major factors: government's response to national and global issues such as gender to ensure that its policies and plans are widely accepted ... and aid donor emphasis on gender issues as a requirement to be addressed in funded programs and projects (Kere 1999:127).

This raises the question of how much of the reform process is truly reflective of the desire and commitment of governments to address gender issues or whether policy statements are perhaps a product of, and response to, international agendas.

National Council of Women

Vanuatu and Solomon Islands have both experienced some difficulties in sustaining and financially maintaining a much-needed umbrella NGO for women. The identity and role of the National Council of Women (NCW) in both countries has been characterised by a certain degree of confusion and ambivalence. Some of these issues arise because of the location of NCW offices, which in Solomon Islands are attached to government, and because of the reliance on government funding in both countries to maintain NCW operations. In Solomon Islands there is also a lack of understanding within the community and among women's groups of the nature of the relationship between the NCW and the government's WDD, and of the functions of both organisations. A survey conducted in 1998 (Kere 1999) reveals both the expectations and understanding of the interviewees that 'the main roles of the WDD to be the conduct of skills training and the funding of income generating programs', indicating limited awareness of the policy and coordination role of the department and further that 'very little is known on the roles and functions of the NCW'. Similar problems exist for the NCW in Vanuatu, which are
compounded by the difficulties of trying to liaise and develop policy with a Women's Affairs Office, subject to constant staff losses and inadequate funding.

**Non government organisations**

The NGO sector in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands had a broad range of gender-equity programmes in place well before the introduction of the government reforms. Lobbying and advocacy on gender issues has also been a feature of many NGOs, with activity occurring at the local, national, regional and international levels. In particular, many of them address gender inequality in the areas of health and education.

Within the internal organisational structure of many NGOs in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands, there has been a deliberate policy of addressing gender issues both in terms of programme development and staffing practices. Development partners such as the United Nations Development Programme and the Asian Development Bank have played a key role in introducing or integrating gender issues into the reform programme. Other international NGOs and funding organisations with clear policy guidelines on gender and development have also influenced project design and policy development in these two countries.

In Solomon Islands, there has been a steady growth in women's organisations (Kere 1999), with 20 being located at the national level and an estimated 3,000 operating at the provincial and community level. Major NGOs such as Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT) have been instrumental in providing and facilitating gender training, particularly through its extensive village development worker scheme. Within SIDT's own organisational structure, there has been a concerted effort to incorporate gender and development practices. Other NGOs, specifically women's organisations, have focused on health, education and income generation issues affecting women. Others, such as the Solomon Islands Information Women's Network, focus on awareness raising on a broad range of gender issues, using radio and conducting training courses. Many of the women's organisations attached to various churches are known as 'church women groups', and they play a significant role in a country that has a widely dispersed rural population. The rural–urban divide is particularly pronounced in both Vanuatu and Solomon Islands and NGOs have proved to be most effective and active in delivering programmes aimed at addressing, for example, women's health and education needs.

In Vanuatu, a broad range of NGOs operate to promote equity and raise gender awareness. Some, such as Wan Smol Bag Theatre Group, National Community Development Trust, Vanuatu Women's Centre, and Vanuatu Rural Development Training Centres Association, employ diverse strategies and approaches to gender issues and in the delivery of specific activities aimed at meeting the needs of women.

**NGO–government relationship**

The relationship between NGOs and government in both countries has been characterised by uneasy dialogue at some levels and only a limited amount of cooperative work in other areas. In Vanuatu, there has been some representation of NGO personnel on government policy committees and there has been a small amount of government representation in NGO projects. In Solomon Islands, the tension in the NGO–government relationship has been far more pronounced; the NGOs have generally not been included in discussions on reform, which has led to a degree of mutual suspicion and some antagonism. However, following the change of government in Solomon Islands, there appears to be an improvement in the relationship and a preparedness by both to work on some joint projects.

In contrast, during the reform process in Vanuatu, there have been efforts to develop the NGO–government relationship but the main impetus appears to have come from the government, resulting in a degree of wariness in the NGO sector. However, in both countries, cooperation between the two sectors often relies on the development of relationships between individuals or specific departments and particular NGOs. The positive relationship between the Women's Development Division in Solomon Islands and a broad range of community organisations is a prime example of how a cooperative situation can be fostered under difficult political, financial and administrative circumstances and which is promoted and developed by particular individuals.

**Conclusion**

The reform process in both Vanuatu and Solomon Islands has resulted in significant changes in gender policy. At this stage it is unclear what degree of substance will be given to the rhetoric of policy and whether the outcome will be a serious commitment to gender and development issues across all departments in both governments and throughout the broader community. The success of a combined practical and strategic approach to gender issues will very much depend upon the establishment of a far more cooperative relationship. There are major challenges for both governments and NGOs in developing a more trusting relationship and concerted approach, which is certainly required for addressing gender issues in these two countries.

**References**


My research investigates ethnicity and gender relationships for selected Pacific Island nations and how these are altered within the New Zealand context (Wurtzburg 1997a, in preparation). This paper examines how gender and ethnic origin affect access to and implementation of the 1995 Domestic Violence Act in Christchurch.

**Methodology**

The research considered here is based largely on two sets of taped interviews. One set comprised 36 people of non-Pacific Island origin living in Christchurch, who work or have worked for the police, social service agencies, the courts, or legal services. In order to understand how the 1995 Act functions in practice in Christchurch, it was both appropriate and necessary to ask those who work in such areas. Information obtained from interviewing them is compared with the views both of women seeking protection from violence and of members of the Pacific Island communities.

The second set of interviews involved individual meetings with 30 Pacific Islanders living in Christchurch, Auckland and Apia (Samoa). The 21 women and 9 men self-identified as: Samoan, New Zealand-born Samoan, Australian-born Samoan, Cook Islander, New Zealand-born Cook Islander, Niuean, Fijian, Fijian-Indian, Tongan, New Zealand-born Tuvaluan, and I-Kiribati. While often people acknowledge a multi-ethnic background, interestingly no one defined themselves as belonging to more than one Pacific Island group, although there was some incorporation of New Zealand identity by those born in the country. In discussions about ethnicity, the perceptions of New Zealanders of European origin concerning visibly different minority people living in their midst were often mentioned, for example: ‘When we do things wrong, we’re Samoans. But when we do the good things, we’re all New Zealanders’ (Samoan woman).

Informants mentioned the range of languages and social customs present in New Zealand, despite the general categorisation among New Zealanders of European origin concerning visibly different minority people living in their midst were often mentioned, for example: ‘We all get lumped together as Pacific Islanders, but we all have different cultures ... and we don’t even understand each other’s language’ (Samoan woman).

Issues of language, culture and gender were matters of concern to those interviewed. Their words are offered here in the historically attested anthropological tradition of giving voice to others (Behar 1996:26). The materials presented are those that relate specifically to selected portions of the Domestic Violence Act.

**The Domestic Violence Act 1995**

New Zealand law relating to family violence is mostly based on the new Domestic Violence Act, which came into force on 1 July 1996. The date of the implementation of this Act was well publicised, although, unfortunately, the specific details of the legal changes – and there were many – were less well understood by both the general public and those working in the courts, the police and other social service agencies (Wurtzburg 1997b). Therefore, the first few months of the new Act were chaotic and confusing both to the majority of legal insiders and to members of the public. This confusion rendered the law inaccessible to some women, especially recent migrants. For example, a woman lawyer interviewed ten months after the initiation of the new Act stated that ‘it does not seem that our women clients out there know ... about this law’. Selected legal changes with regard to the Act are discussed below.

The stated purpose of the Act is to decrease domestic violence by '(a) recognising that domestic violence, in all its forms, is unacceptable behaviour; and (b) ensuring that, where domestic violence occurs, there is effective legal protection for its victims' (s.5(1)). At times this aim is supported, and at other times undermined, by the interpretation of issues relating to gender and culture:

- Fijian and Samoan [men at domestic incidents] that I have attended recently [in Christchurch] ... don't accept that they can't beat their wives. (policeman)
- Because he's [father] the chief in the family ... we have to do what he say ... She [mother] knows what is going on in the house [beating of adult children], but she can't do nothing because my father is the chief, and she has to listen to him, and like obey him. (Samoan woman)
- It's very hard for them [Samoan men] to hit the women here [in New Zealand]. And that's why a lot of woman that come here to New Zealand, they so happy. They feel like they free ... They know that once a man give hiding to them, they just go straight to the police. (Samoan woman)
- I'm very hard for them [Samoan men] to hit the women here [in New Zealand]. That's why a lot of woman that come here to New Zealand, they so happy. They feel like they free ... They know that once a man give hiding to them, they just go straight to the police. (Samoan woman)

In some situations, the Samoan women here feel completely empowered by the New Zealand way of life. Women are independent. They have their own incomes. (female lawyer)

The Domestic Violence Act states that court access should be ‘as speedy, inexpensive, and simple as is consistent with justice’
The influence of gender and culture also plays a role in terms of this access:

Religion was a frequent topic of discussion in my interviews of people who may be from very different island backgrounds:

Here in New Zealand, your village is actually your church ... If you ... meet another Samoan, you work out where they're from through the church. (New Zealand-born Samoan woman)

From my own experience in Wellington, I know people rely on the church minister. To compensate for the absence of the other networks that they would normally have. (New Zealand-born Samoan woman; interview in Samoa)

The reliance upon church and minister can have negative consequences for a Pacific Island woman dealing with domestic violence under New Zealand law. She may not be made fully aware of the legal options available to her and she may be unable to make her own decision because of culturally prescribed influences:

Samoan women ... are pressurised by the church, by their husband, by the whole community, by all their relatives ... to reconcile [with their husband/partner]. (female lawyer)

Sometimes [Samoan women] come in [to court] with ... a minister... and there seems to be ... pressure on them to withdraw the charges ... You know, shameful and so on. (female court worker)

With regard to shame, women seem to bear the greater proportion of social and family blame when a male partner is violent:

There's always that little remark [by women in cases of domestic violence] ... 'It's my fault ... I'm the one to be blamed'. (Niuean woman)

My father [in Samoa] found out what happened [that I left my physically abusive husband and went to a women's refuge] ... and my father said, 'Shame on you. You put the family down. You put the name of the family down' ... Even though they know it's not my fault, it's a big shame for the family. (Samoan woman)

What we find with Polynesian families is that ... they shut down on us. Because ... it's very shameful ... Very rarely do we get a member of a Polynesian family calling the police to say they've had a major domestic. (police officer)

The above statement makes greater sense when Samoan attitudes to marriage are considered:

When you are married, you are married to the whole family. You are not married as an individual to another individual ... If I will be beaten, if I will be verbally abused, that will be on my ... aiga, my family too. (Samoan woman)

The issue of respect for elders may also play a role in women's interactions with the courts:

If you ... talk back to your parents ... that's seen as being cheeky or disrespectful. It's Palagi [European] influence. (New Zealand-born Samoan woman)

Language barriers

Court access can also be affected by linguistic ability (Aiomanu 1996). Many older Pacific Island people or more recent immigrants to New Zealand may have limited skills in spoken or written English. They may also be ashamed of their inability in English and may not admit to needing assistance: 'My father, even though he's been here a long time, he doesn't speak English that well' (New Zealand-born Samoan woman). Language can affect women's abilities to contact the police or, once contacted, to explain the nature of the problem:

In situations of limited English comprehension, police will use an interpreter or family member, yeah, usually a child or someone like that if they've got a reasonable grasp of the English language. Also the parents at times. (police officer)

You can sort of get around it [lack of English ability], because I suppose you can make a fist and [say] 'Has he hit you?' Yes and no. (police officer)

[A refuge worker] brought her [Samoan woman] in [to the women's refuge] sort of in the middle of the night. And she had spent several hours in the police station waiting for an interpreter [who was a man] and then another couple of hours writing up her statement. (social service, female)

Definitions of 'violence' and 'domestic relationship'

Violence is defined in the Domestic Violence Act as '(a) physical abuse, (b) sexual abuse, [and] (c) psychological abuse, including, but not limited to, - (i) intimidation, (ii) harassment, (iii) damage to property, [and] (iv) threats of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or psychological abuse' (s.3). However, the actual definition of violence utilised by police at the scene may vary dramatically from that prescribed by law:

It's no offence to fight in your own home. You've just got to be able to distinguish ... what a fight is and what an assault is ... A fight is two people assaulting each other equally. So it can be your interpretation of did someone get hurt. (police officer)

Say someone ... may have thrown a few plates or thrown something through a glass door ... Everyone argues. That's just part of a relationship. It's when things either have a history or he's ... caused some real damage to the person ... If the assault is of a minor nature, say a push or a shove, then we're probably unlikely to make an arrest. (police officer)

Section 4 of the Act expanded the definition of 'domestic relationship' to include partners, family members, those sharing...
a household, and individuals having 'a close personal relationship with the other person'. The previous legislation 'had only considered married or de facto partners of different sexes to be in a domestic relationship. This was a significant change in the law which was variously interpreted by informants: 'Everything is a domestic these days ... It's so broad now that it's a pain in the butt' (policeman).

**Protection orders and contact**

Under the new Act, the protected person is given the right to determine whether or not to live with or have any contact with the respondent (the perpetrator of the violence) (s.20). This legal right may not be enforced adequately if police do not understand, or minimise, its purpose:

> They [women] now have the authority to switch on and switch off in terms of allowing the person to remain in the house or to leave. And there's one judge that said 'it's a bit like flicking a light switch on and off'. (policeman)

Once a woman has been granted a protection order, she has a piece of paper which acknowledges her right to safety. However, her physical safety may depend on her ability both to phone

> for the police and then inform them if there are violations of the order. For various reasons, it may be difficult for her to do this. Ideally, if she is able to do so, the police will then arrest the perpetrator and he will be charged; however, the reality is often slightly different:

> If ... people are going to get protection orders they really need a telephone [which many Pacific Island people do not possess] ... My experience of a number of Pacific Island women is that they, unless they are living in a community where there are other Pacific Islanders, they don't know their neighbours ... So they're actually very isolated. The orders really don't serve them very well. (female court worker)

Instead of living in your extended family in the village, you're suddenly living (isolated) in a flat in Hoon Hay. (New Zealand-born Samoan woman; interview in Samoa)

> The women ... don't want to make complaints if they're Pacific Islanders, but that's generally right across the board with domestics. (policeman)

One particular client [rang] ... She said, 'I phoned the police all morning and they haven't come. And he has broken so many windows ... because I won't let him in. The kids are all hiding under the bed' ... So ... I phoned them [police], and ... eventually they did take him away, but released him within six hours. (female lawyer)

> They're [perpetrators of assaults] just been wham, bam, straight to jail ... That will have opened their eyes a fair bit. I've certainly had some good feedback from the victims over that. (policeman)

Males were getting locked up purely on a gender basis ... I sort of require there to be either injuries or a situation where the male has ... detained[ed] her in some way and then perhaps physically abuse[d] her. (policeman)

> And then women's refuge sort-of jumping on the band wagon and saying 'oh, you should look everyone up' ... So we just go there and cover our own bums by separating them for the night and sending one of them to a friend's house, or whatever. (policeman)

**Power relations and pressing charges**

In the period after arrests, women may be pressured to withdraw charges or they themselves may honestly wish charges to be removed. This behaviour is often a symptom of the long-term abuse and their general lack of power and control over their own lives, but it may not be understood in these terms by those who have the power to withdraw charges:

> I had enough with this ... kicking and hitting ... I rang the police ... They asked me if I wanted to press charges against my father. But I never wanted to. (Samoan woman)

> I have a suspicion that a lot of applications to withdraw are made on cultural grounds ... especially those situations where the male is perhaps dominant ... and the woman is ... coerced into advancing grounds for not wanting to proceed. As a general rule, I don't make allowance for culture in my decisions whether to continue a prosecution or withdraw. It's either was there an assault or wasn't there an assault. (policeman)

> I would say ... that probably the majority of Samoan people have refused to give evidence and have withdrawn and want their partner home for whatever reason. (female court worker)

Lack of understanding of the reasons for withdrawals of either protection orders or charges under the Crimes Act 1961 can influence police in ways which negatively impact upon other women or other members of that ethnic group:

> To be honest we're wasting our time in a lot of domestic violence cases ... They call us when they get beaten, but then they don't want to go the whole hog and make the decision for themselves ... Why do we bother with some people? (policeman)

**Conclusion**

The statements cited here, relevant to the Domestic Violence Act, provide insights into how gender and ethnicity influence access to and implementation of the law in Christchurch. Based on this analysis it seems that women are disadvantaged more than men, and Pacific Island women are doubly disadvantaged. It is also apparent that Pacific Islanders' views of family responsibility, domestic violence and the law often differ from the views of New Zealanders of European origin and the legal statutes. Briefly, the following generalisations can be suggested:

- Pacific Island informants emphasised responsibility towards the family and the broader social grouping, which contrasts strongly with the more individual-oriented New Zealand society, expressed in laws stressing personal responsibility and individual marriage contracts.
- Oceanic respondents paid much attention to the topic of language. Lack of proficiency in spoken or written English has tremendous ramifications for
people living in New Zealand and negotiating with English-speaking agency representatives, such as police, court staff and others.

- The connection between religious affiliation and ethnicity was considered significant by many Pacific Island informants. Generally, these links are not adequately understood by agencies dealing with domestic violence in Christchurch, which contributes additional levels of tension to stressful situations.

- Respect and shame were both topics which generated much discussion by Pacific Island participants. Typically, these concepts were comprehended in very different terms from those prevalent in mainstream New Zealand. They may have disadvantageous outcomes for Pacific Islanders negotiating complex legalities. For example, an individual may state in court that they do understand something when in fact they do not, and this may result in miscarriage of justice.

In conclusion, broader understanding of the different worldviews among members of the Pacific Island communities, members of the legal profession, and service agencies is needed. It would assist in the administration of greater justice with regard to domestic violence policy in Christchurch if both this understanding and educational information concerning the gendered nature of domestic violence spread throughout the community.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful for the support of the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

References


Vietnam represents a very interesting case study for the issue of gender in governance. It is a country with a strong modern history of women in leadership positions and currently has the highest percentage of women in cabinet in Asia. This essay will look at the background to this achievement and investigate, from a field perspective, how gender is being encouraged in governance.

**Historical context**

In 1930 the Vietnamese Communist Party was established under the leadership of President Ho Chi Minh who, in the same year, created the Women's Emancipation Association (later renamed the Vietnam Women's Union), making it the world's longest-running national machinery for women. Ho Chi Minh identified gender equality as one of the ten main tasks of the Vietnamese revolution. He stated:

> We must respect women. One of the aims of the revolution is to ensure equality of rights for the women. Lenin taught us: women make up half of society. Society cannot be totally free so long as the women are not freed. Women must fight for their right to be equal with men. Men must respect them. The Party cell must educate its members and the people in respecting equality between husband and wife (VWU 1969).

The strong socialist politics led to the enshrinement of gender equality in the first Constitution of Vietnam in 1946, which states: 'All power in the country belongs to the Vietnamese people, irrespective of race, sex, fortune, class, religion . . . and that women are equal to men in all respects' (Article 9). The Constitutions of 1959, 1980 and 1992 further refine and highlight the rights of women in the context of economic and political equality.

During the ‘American War’ (1964-75), women became more highly visible as they assumed new responsibilities in the government. Vietnam is a country comprising 63 provinces. Each province is made up of districts, within which are communes or villages. Each of these decision making levels is represented by People's Councils. Between 1965 and 1967 the proportion of women on district People's Councils increased from 25.5 per cent to 45.8 per cent; on village People's Councils, from 19.3 to 47.4 per cent; on district administrative committees, from 11.2 to 26.48 per cent; and on village administrative committees, from 11.2 to 32.7 per cent (VWU 1968:24). During this period, there was an associated increase in the number of children in creches (from 276,122 to 378,078).

After one year of implementation of the resolutions on women cadres, the emergence of a numerous corps of women cadres in all branches at all levels, particularly in the economic, administrative, scientific and technical branches has reflected the growth of the Vietnamese women's movement (VWU 1968:24–5).

Socialist policy provided for women's strategic needs, including labour laws, extensive access to maternity benefits and child care centres, access to education and employment, and legalised abortion.

The Party and the Government, despite the many difficulties they are encountering, try their best to improve the livelihood of labouring women and their children, so as to alleviate the familial burden and ensure women's health. In 1983 paid maternity leave in Vietnam was extended from 60 to 75 days. In December 1984, according to Resolution No. 176a, paid maternity leave was extended to 180 days. More creches and kindergartens have been set up by the State, factories, cooperatives . . . In many city wards, special groups of babysitters have been set up by the women's union for children who for one reason or another cannot go to the creches or kindergartens (VWU 1985:2).

Although this differs from the West, where women fought (and are fighting) for these rights, women in Vietnam were given them as a part of government policy, rather than gaining them through a strategy of mobilisation such as a 'women's movement'. This is not to say that there was not an organised women's 'movement' in Vietnam, but it was government inspired and supported. This influence of the state brought legislation, government support and funding to women's concerns.

In 1980 Vietnam signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This was also the year of the new Constitution of Vietnam, which states:

> The state and society ensure the development of maternity clinics, creches, kindergartens, canteens and other social facilities to create favourable conditions for women to work, rest and study (Article 63).

The Women's Union points to the significance and 'historic importance of this double juridical instrument of national and international law, which coincides with the first half of the UN Decade for Women' (Ngo Ba Thanh 1983:22).

Vietnam ratified the CEDAW in 1982, then in 1984 it established the National Committee for the Women's Decade. In 1993 the government strengthened this committee, with the addition of further ministerial members, and renamed it the...
National Committee for the Advancement of Women (NCFAW). It is chaired by the President of the Vietnam Women's Union, with the vice-chairs being the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Education and the Vice-Minister of Training.

**National Plan of Action**

As a part of implementing the 1995 Beijing International Platform for Action, Vietnam developed its own plan: the National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Vietnamese Women by the Year 2000. This document was formulated by the NCFAW. It outlines 11 concrete objectives (Objective 4 is to 'enhance the role and position of women in leadership mechanisms and decision making') and 139 concrete actions that specify ministry, branch and province responsibilities in implementing the plan. The objectives also have specific targets, to be met by 2000, for example:

- Elect ed bodies at all levels should have 20–30 per cent of women cadres.
- Government and consultation bodies at different levels must have 15–20 per cent of women cadres.
- Ministries/branches with a majority of women must have women leaders.

The plan was ratified by the then Prime Minister, and signed by the new Prime Minister after taking power in October 1997.

**1997 National Assembly elections**

To support the country initiative, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed a project together with the NCFAW to implement the National Plan of Action, which focused on building the capacity necessary for achieving its specific objectives pertaining to women in leadership. The project consisted of a cooperative and multifaceted strategy with the NCFAW and the Vietnam Women's Union: the training of candidates, leadership training for women candidates, a public information campaign, and the development of information resources.

The strategy consisted of a four-day 'training of trainers' course focused on leadership skills, followed by six local leadership training courses for the 144 women candidates who stood for election for the Tenth National Assembly in July 1997. The courses provided the candidates with the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the various factors influencing their political position in the elections and to identify concrete strategies to increase their chances of success. Emphasis was placed on campaigning and presentation skills and the preparation of proposals for action. In addition, a press conference was held before the elections to promote positive images of women in leadership and to push for greater representation of women in government.

For 27-year-old health worker, Tran Thi Hoa Ry from the Kho Me minority group in Bac Lieu province, the training session was the first time she had ever spoken in front of a group. During her first few attempts, she stood in silence. On the last day, with support and coaching from the other participants, she made a five-minute speech. She is now one of the youngest members of the National Assembly.

In 1975 women constituted 32 per cent of the National Assembly of Vietnam; in 1997, the figure was 18 per cent. The 1997 elections resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of women (from 18 per cent to over 26 per cent) in the National Assembly, the country's highest elected decision making body. This makes Vietnam currently the second-highest ranking country in the Asia–Pacific region for number of women in parliament. The NCFAW concludes that this electoral success was due to many different factors, including the training of candidates. Madame Truong My Hoa, then Chair of the NCFAW, reflected on these factors:

Firstly we should note an increase in public awareness of gender issues, a change in society's attitude towards women, due to the implementation of many Resolutions and Instructions of the Party and the State... the leadership of the Party Politburo and levels of the Party, the attention paid by different levels of the Government to create favourable conditions for women, the guidance of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, as well as of electoral committees at various levels (National Committee for the Advancement of Women 1997).

**1999 People's Council elections**

The project was replicated, with similar training for the People's Council elections in November 1999. A Manual for Women in People's Councils was developed by the Women's Union, with the assistance of CIDA (Canadian International Development Assistance). The manual focuses on women in leadership, the roles and functions of People's Councils, necessary skills and gender awareness. The latter focus on gender awareness is significant. The philosophy underlying the UNDP project is that women in leadership and mainstreaming activities is not just about increasing the number of women leaders but also about promoting an approach to leadership which is gender sensitive in terms of the process as well as the product. This means encouraging gender sensitive working conditions and implementing gender responsive policies and programmes.

Over 17,600 women were trained to stand for office at a provincial district and province level through 595 training courses. After the huge success of the training of female candidates for the National Assembly elections, it was disappointing not to see a similar dramatic increase in the percentage of women in the People's Council elections. The results were an increase from 20.45 to 22.5 per cent (2.15 per cent increase) of women elected into the People's Council at a provincial level; from 18.1 per cent to 20.7 per cent (2.6 per cent increase) at the district level; and 14.4 per cent to 16.34 per cent (1.94 per cent increase) at the commune level.

This certainly represents a clear increase in all areas, but not to the targets that were expected. Mme Truong Thi Khue, Deputy President of the Vietnam Women's Union, in a report...
on the results of the elections, identified three factors leading to this lower than expected result:

- an insufficient number of women at the grassroots level with adequate social position and educational level (and other additional locality requirements including specific ethnic minority, age and party membership criteria) to stand for election;
- a perception in some localities that since women should stay home and do housework, there was no point in voting for women; and
- the fact that some local parties did not pay enough attention to the female member percentage. Only three provinces/cities obtained the female member percentage of 25 per cent or higher (VWU 2000:3).

In future elections, account needs to be taken not only of preparing women candidates, but also of increasing local parties' awareness about the importance of bolstering the percentage of women in People's Councils; in creating more awareness in society of the multiple roles of women and the importance of their roles in decision making at local and national levels; and a general increase in the status and educational level of women, particularly ethnic minority women.

These challenges are not going to be resolved by short training courses, but are long-term issues that are faced by most countries. Vietnam illustrates a case where these needs are being identified clearly and progress is being made with full government support.

Note

1. The All China Women's Federation (ACWF) was formed in 1949. In 1995 the Vietnam Women's Union had 98,000 full-time cadres working for it and implementing government policy on women (Basu 1995:11).

References


Gender and economic governance

Janet Hunt, Australian Council for Overseas Aid

Economic governance is one of four key areas emphasised in any governance programme, the others being public sector reform, legal reform, and civil society. Economic governance has generally been interpreted to mean providing a market-friendly economic environment (including fiscal and monetary policy), dealing with banking and financial system weaknesses, and reform of state-owned enterprises. Dealing with corruption is a related issue.

The argument put forth for addressing these issues is that good economic and financial management is necessary to create a conducive environment for the private sector to flourish and for successful use of development assistance. It is argued that private-sector-led growth is essential for development, but the governance system must also create some equity if this growth is to be sustained. Among the kinds of economic governance activities which Australian aid may support are:

- strengthening central government financial agencies and central economic planning departments;
- assisting governments to develop appropriate policies and procedures to facilitate integration into trade liberalisation (for example, assistance to comply with World Trade Organisation (WTO) requirements);
- improving the legal and regulatory framework for private sector development (for example, addressing bankruptcy laws or property rights laws relating to land, improving financial sector monitoring and supervision);
- developing taxation systems (for example, Australian assistance has been given to selected nations to simplify and reduce import taxes or to introduce a value added tax); and
- supporting small and medium enterprises (for example, through the development of microcredit schemes, or through training in business, marketing, and so on).

How does one look at these activities from a gender perspective? Clearly some activities, for example improving taxation systems to bring increased revenue to governments, have the potential to improve conditions for women. Taxation reforms which strengthen a government's capacity to gain increased tax receipts offer a chance for governments to increase their social expenditures, and this may broadly benefit women. However, the introduction of a new tax on consumption could have negative impacts on women trying to manage very tight budgets for family essentials. Similarly, programmes to reduce corruption have the potential to benefit women, although there is no guarantee that they will. And while microcredit programmes increasingly target women as beneficiaries, the actual benefits to their lives of such programmes depend on a multitude of contextual factors, not least of which is whether the increased workload such programmes may induce is offset by other reductions in the burden on women.

However, while some of the gender aspects of such economic governance projects are obvious (for example, is training equally available and utilised by women as well as men?), I want to discuss the 'big picture': the global push for opening markets and bringing all nations into an integrated global economy. This underlying rationale provides the basis for many specific economic governance projects. A great deal of change is required in this underlying paradigm if greater gender equity, rather than polarisation of gender positions, is to be achieved.

Globalisation, inequality and gender

Globalisation, or the liberalisation of trade, investment and financial services, and a strong emphasis on privatisation, exacerbates inequality. The latest report of the UN Development Programme shows that the world's richest 225 individuals now have a combined wealth equal to the annual income of the poorest 47 per cent of the world's people (statistically, it is likely that some 70 per cent of them are women). As global inequality worsens, gender inequality worsens with it.

It is crucial that we turn our attention to these 'big picture' trends in economic globalisation, which include:

- restructuring relationships between countries, as well as within, as a result of WTO and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies, such that powerful interests prevail;
- the expanding power of multinational organisations and increased market dominance by fewer and fewer firms – 100 corporations control one-fifth of all foreign-owned assets in the world;
- changing patterns of global employment, where women and children bear the brunt of downward pressures on labour costs and conditions (child labour is one example of this). Trade liberalisation will often increase gender inequality in sex-segregated labour markets, yet there are no gender impact studies of trade liberalisation;
- reduced public sector investment, which means cutbacks in essential services that are used.

March 2000
proportionately more by women because of their traditional carer roles;
• rapid flows of speculative capital washing around the world, deciding the fates of millions of people almost overnight. Nine out of every ten dollars crossing national borders are speculative, and do not contribute to productive investment. When the economic crash came in Indonesia and international speculators deserted Indonesia almost overnight, women suffered cutbacks in health and family planning spending, and had to deal with huge price increases of rice, cooking oil and medicine. Large numbers of women moved into prostitution, and reported violence against women increased;
• reduced access by people to forums which are making decisions about our futures. The further away the decisions are made, the harder it is for women (represented more among the bus passengers than the jetsetters) to influence them; and
• essential national social and environmental regulation is resisted as a barrier to trade, so 'social clauses' are not on, and environmental and health standards are pushed to the lowest common denominator level.

Gender and market theory

Underlying these trends is a faith in market orthodoxy that has failed to adjust to the times. Market theory, as articulated by its originator Adam Smith, was based on a number of key assumptions about how market forces would lead to socially optimal outcomes:

• Buyers and sellers must be too small to influence the market price.
• Complete information must be available to all participants in the market and there can be no trade secrets.
• Sellers must bear the full cost of the products they sell and pass them on in the sale price.
• Investment capital must remain within national borders, and trade between countries must be balanced.
• Savings must be invested in the creation of productive capital.

Many of these conditions no longer prevail. Current market orthodoxy is based on outdated assumptions, which is probably why it is not working for socially optimal outcomes. Underlying market theory is a mechanistic, reductionist view of society and the economy which many women are challenging. Feminist economist Hazel Henderson's approach (1986) is to see the economy as a three-layered cake with icing. The bottom layer is the natural resource base, the environment on which all life depends. The next layer is the social economy, the non-monetary sector, in which women are particularly active with all the unpaid labour and social reproduction work that they do. The top layer is the public sector, which includes all the public infrastructure – roads, sewerage, schools, hospitals, local government, child care centres, and so on. The icing on the cake is the monetised private sector.

The three layers of the cake hold up the icing; it would be nothing without the layers. Yet when most economists talk, they only talk about the icing, separating it from the whole cake. They either do not see the interrelationships or, if they do, their theories cannot deal with the complexity of the real world.

Here is a small example of how such a perspective changes one's view of development. Imagine a group of Papua New Guinean women who live downstream of a major mining development. They have always lived on sago, which no longer flourishes because the river water in which it grew has become polluted and doesn't flow at the same levels. They had used this river for drinking and washing before, but that was no longer safe. Their menfolk had been encouraged to go and work in the mine, which some had done. This gave them cash in quantities they'd never seen before, which resulted in them drinking and becoming abusive and violent to women. The mining camp had also attracted prostitution into the area, and the local women were now fearful of being infected with HIV/AIDS by partners who used the prostitutes. Economic decision makers would view these changes as a positive development, contributing significantly to national economic advancement. They are only looking at the icing; they haven't noticed damage to the cake.

A more gender equitable economy

The holistic view of the economy is radically challenging this orthodox economic approach. It sets different rules:

• Full cost accounting: women and the environment must be counted in, not treated as externalities. Costs shifting from the private sector of the economy to the unpaid sector can then be identified, and cost savings will be recognised as simply cost shifting.
• Make the goals of the global economy human development (not simply GDP growth), and hold economists to account for achieving them. Insist on integration of the social and environmental with the economic. In developing countries, growth is necessary to reduce poverty, but the quality of that growth matters.
• Give incentives to productive employment creating capital, and strong disincentives to speculative capital, such as the introduction of a speculative transaction tax (for example, the Tobin Tax). Set better rules for globalisation.
• Make companies accountable. We grant them their corporate existence, we must set the terms on which they conduct their business to achieve human development and environmental sustainability. Codes of conduct are necessary.
• Open up economic decision making bodies such as the WTO and the IMF to the people. Make them as democratic and transparent as possible and require
them to achieve equitable human development and environmental goals. Require trade agreements to show their positive impacts on humans and the environment before finalising them.

- Transform the productive monetised economy to enable people’s roles in the reproductive or social economy to be respected, so that we can all live more balanced lives.
- Engender political decision making at all levels.

Achieving these changes requires massive effort and will take a long time. However, development assistance in the governance area can mean some small steps in the right direction if recent World Bank research on gender and governance is utilised (Dollar and Gatti 1999, Dollar, Fisman and Roberta 1999, Klasen 1999), and if governance work is closely integrated with other sectoral priorities. This research shows, for example, that gender inequality, particularly in education, has a negative impact on economic growth. As much as 0.4 per cent and 0.9 per cent of the differences in growth rates between regions can be accounted for by large gender gaps in education in the poor performing regions. The greater the representation of women in parliaments, the lower the level of corruption. This holds true across a wide spectrum of countries.

Greater attention to gender in education and other aspects of governance may realise rapid improvements in both economic growth and reductions in corruption, as well as contribute to poverty reduction. This is where a greater focus on the quality of economic growth is important. Achieving improvements both in women’s education and in economic growth has greater social benefits than growth strategies which undermine women’s well-being.

Global integration and rural development in Laos

It is worth examining, from a gender perspective, a recent study of Australian assistance to the People’s Democratic Republic of Laos. Jonathon Cornford (1999) concludes that there have been two major areas in which Australian development organisations, supported by AusAID, have played an advocacy role in Laos: to engage in the processes of modernisation and integration into the global economy; and the advancement of rural livelihoods and well-being.

Cornford argues that ‘ultimately these two areas of development advocacy lie on conflicting paths’ (1999:iii). The projects that reinforce the first trend are from the ‘governance’ sector, which enhances the capacity of the Lao central government to implement programmes to the detriment of rural localities. He nominates the following projects as contributing to the global integration path:

- the Friendship bridge, which is seen as a catalyst for sub-regional economic integration in line with Asian Development Bank regional development directions;
- assistance to Laos to enter the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) and AFTA in 1996–97;
- assistance in the education sector, which is strongly biased to tertiary sector, English language training to key government ministries, such as the ASEAN Department in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and
- the land titling project, designed to develop land markets in a nation where usufructuary rights dominate.

Australia’s considerable contribution to the rural sector in Laos in the 1990s included:

- the Lao Uplands agricultural development project;
- two projects in Xiagnabouli Province, in primary health care and integrated village development; and
- Community Aid Abroad’s rural development and institutional strengthening project.

These latter projects, Cornford argues, have been particularly successful in improving rural lives.

Cornford concludes that development assistance should strengthen sectors of the state and/or civil society organisations that have the greatest potential to advance rural livelihoods. This would certainly be the type of assistance that could significantly benefit poor women. This includes local government and civil society strengthening, and strengthening those central departments which themselves may promote a critique of current economic orthodoxy (such as those concerned with social or rural development).

It would be worthwhile if more studies similar to Cornford’s were to be conducted, but with an explicit gender focus. Governance projects which simply enable national governments to more easily integrate into the global economy may worsen inequity and, hence, gender inequity. Those which strengthen community or local decision making processes and which adopt a more holistic view of the local economy may improve it.

References


Women in politics and good governance: Transformative politics in Asia–Pacific

Lorraine Corner, UNIFEM East & Southeast Asia, Bangkok

Introduction

According to a recent report (IPU 1999:29), only 14 per cent of parliamentarians in Asia and just under 14 per cent in the Pacific are women. In the last decade, interest in women’s participation in politics in the Asia–Pacific region has focused on three main issues: why more women should become involved in politics and decision making at all levels; how more women can enter and survive in politics; and how women can make a difference in the quality of political decision making.

Networking and institution building

Although various women’s groups in Asia–Pacific have been engaged in the struggle to promote women’s political roles since the end of the nineteenth century, the movement really gained momentum in developing countries only in the last ten years. In 1990, UNESCO wanted to present the output of a research project on Women in Politics. At the suggestion of UNIFEM, which provided co-funding, UNESCO and UNIFEM brought together non government organisation (NGO) women activists and women politicians to provide an appropriate forum. The participants soon began to network and strategise on the future of women in politics in the Asia–Pacific region. An obvious requirement was the creation of mechanisms, and ultimately institutions, that could assist women struggling to survive in politics, and others seeking to enter, to share their experiences and learn from one another.

In 1992, Netherlands funding enabled a few of these women to meet in Manila, where they decided to form a Women in Politics network. An important characteristic of the group was the fact that several were already actively engaged in politics, while others had the kind of administrative and management experience that would be invaluable in establishing and maintaining institutions.

The outcome of the meeting was the incorporation in the Philippines in 1992 of the Center for Asia–Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP). CAPWIP began with good regional coverage from its 13 board members, representing Australia, Japan, Korea, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and the USA. In 1996, the board decided to add two representatives from each sub-region, to be nominated by the CAPWIP sub-regional focal points.

In June 1994, CAPWIP organised the First Asia–Pacific Congress of Women in Politics. Held in Manila in the week after the regional preparatory committee for the Fourth World Conference on Women, the congress represented a sharpening and focusing of ideas widely debated by governments and NGOs throughout the region during the preceding months. Twenty-one countries and territories were represented by the 241 participants drawn from academia, government and politics at all levels, NGOs and community groups.

Following the success of this first congress, the CAPWIP regional network initiated sub-regional workshops. In South Asia, Chandni Joshi (UNIFEM Regional Programme Adviser) and Ranjana Kumari (Director of the Center for Social Research (CSR) in New Delhi) organised a Women in Politics Workshop for the sub-region, held in Kathmandu later in 1994. That workshop named CSR as the CAPWIP focal point in the region and set up a loosely structured council that is now a fully fledged network: the South Asian Committee for Political Empowerment of Women (SACPEW), with CSR as its secretariat. A later meeting of SACPEW in Sri Lanka approved publication of a newsletter, the addition of 30 new organisational members, and a plan for regular national and South Asian conferences and meetings, research and leadership training.

In East Asia, the Korean Institute for Women and Politics (KIWP), chaired by Dr Jung-Sook Kim, became the sub-regional focal point. It organised the First East Asia Congress of Women in Politics in Huairou, China, during the 1995 NGO Forum. Although logistical difficulties and the lack of a common language have hampered activities at the sub-regional level, the individual countries of East Asia have been enthusiastic members of the regional network.

The Women in Politics Pacific Centre (WIPPaC) grew out of the experience of Pacific participants in the First Asia–Pacific Congress. CAPWIP and the UNIFEM Pacific office, with funding from AusAID and the Australian national UNIFEM committee, initiated the First Regional Women Leaders Congress in the Pacific, held in July 1995. A total of 26 women and four men, representing 15 Pacific Island countries, attended the four-day congress on Effective Governance and Transformative Politics and decided to form WIPPaC as an informal networking group, with UNIFEM Pacific acting as the secretariat. The Pacific network is now among the most active of the sub-regions in the CAPWIP network, having organised sub-regional WIPPaC congresses in 1995 and 1996, and regional training programmes in 1997, 1998 and 1999, and hosted the Third Asia–Pacific Congress on Women in Politics in November 1996.

Global networking

From the outset, the group that established CAPWIP saw the potential value of global networks. They took advantage of the
1994 Taipei Global Summit on Women’s Leadership in Politics which brought together women from both regional and global networks. This group agreed to work towards the formation of a global network and to meet again at the preparatory committee for the Beijing World Conference to be held in New York in March 1995.

The Fourth World Conference on Women provided an ideal opportunity for the various networks to meet and strategise at minimum cost. During the NGO Forum in Huairou, four regional congresses were organised by GLOBALNET and CAPWIP: the First European–North American Congress of Women in Politics; the Second Asia–Pacific Congress of Women in Politics; the First Latin American–Caribbean Congress on Women in Politics; and the First Western Asia Congress of Women in Politics.

Finally, the First Global Congress of Women in Politics was held on 6 September 1995 in Huairou to receive the reports of the respective regional congresses and to share visions, plans and strategies. Agreeing that a global network was needed, the congress decided on a second global congress in 1997, again with CAPWIP as the interim secretariat.

The Second Global Congress of Women in Politics was originally scheduled for February 1998 in New Delhi. Somewhat ironically, the Indian national elections the same month forced relocation to the Philippines. Rescheduled to August 1998 in Makati and organised by the Global Network of Women in Politics, this congress was hosted by the Women in Politics Institute, Philippines, with CAPWIP as secretariat, UNIFEM as co-sponsor and the Asian Development Bank as co-sponsor. At the conclusion of the meeting, new officers were elected and a new secretariat designated in Africa.

Why women?

In some ways, the history of the CAPWIP congresses and associated meetings documents the story of the development of ideas about women’s roles in politics and good governance in the developing countries of Asia–Pacific. One of CAPWIP’s first activities was political leadership training, organised in partnership with the Global Summit in Bangkok in 1993. Among the participants were delegates from China, Malaysia, the Pacific, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. I was here, after a session on power, that the group, prompted by Kanwaljit Soin, a nominated MP in Singapore, began to ask: ‘What kind of politics should women promote?’

This question produced the second theme of the First Asia–Pacific Congress on Women in Politics: Why Women? What Politics? Participants were challenged to define why women needed to become actively engaged in politics and to identify the kind of politics that they wanted to practise. Dr Rounaq Jahan, of Columbia University, emphasised that women must enter politics in order to bring about major changes in their lives because the political arena is where mainstream decisions are made. The congress also agreed that only women can really understand and articulate women’s needs and specific gender issues, that only they can provide a women’s perspective on all issues. For their concerns to be met effectively, therefore, women must be directly represented as a group in the political process.

What politics?

The answer to this question was clear in principle: women should make a difference. However, the details of what kind of difference were less clear. The general expectation was that women’s involvement would improve standards of governance. Kanwaljit Soin referred to a 1991 Australian survey which found that 54 per cent of those surveyed believed that women entering politics were motivated by altruistic and community welfare concerns, compared with only 13 per cent for men. By contrast, 64 per cent thought men were motivated by personal interest and power, compared with only 11 per cent for women. Rounaq Jahan also argued that women are better equipped to be transformative because of their role as outsiders, bringing in new kinds of values. Khunying Supatra Masdit, an active Thai politician since 1979, emphasised that, for her, politics should not be corrupt, should serve people’s rather than personal interests and should be action-oriented.

The congress also described some characteristics of political processes that improve women’s prospects for success. Rounaq Jahan noted that it was particularly difficult for women to enter the winner-take-all American and British models of parliamentary democracy, while European experiences suggested that women candidates are more likely to succeed in systems based on proportional representation.

Transformative politics?

Although the term ‘transformative politics’ emerged during the First Asia–Pacific Congress, that meeting did not focus very directly on the nature of the transformation that women were expected to bring about. The vision of politics that participants presented in the workshops was rather idealistic, emphasising empowering, community-oriented, ‘clean and honest’ and participatory governance, in contrast to the traditional ‘power over’, capital-oriented, corrupt and top-down models of politics that were identified with traditional ‘masculine’ and ‘transactional’ politics. In the heady atmosphere leading up to the Beijing Conference, there was a feeling that women would be ‘better’, less corrupt and more socially oriented than men. Thus, the workshop sessions focused mainly on practical measures to help women enter and succeed in politics through training, mentoring, the education of women voters, networking, and so on.

At Beijing, some prominent women politicians made it clear that getting into politics was barely the first step. Once there, it had proved extremely difficult—in some cases, impossible—for them, however strongly motivated, to make a difference. Certainly, few would be considered transformative in terms of the definitions that had emerged from the regional Asia–Pacific congresses. Thus, later regional and sub-regional congresses began to address the challenge from a more realistic perspective that focused on political structures and mechanisms.

March 2000
Even when successfully elected, women almost invariably remain part of a tiny minority on women's issues or in advocating a women's perspective on mainstream issues. However strongly they promote their issues and perspectives, most find little or no support and are forced to take up more mainstream positions and issues in order to have any impact in their chosen field. Thus, voters often find that the women they elected do not 'make a difference'. This may be reflected in a backlash in the vote for these or other women at subsequent elections. In such a hostile environment, the women politicians who survive in the longer term are likely to be those who push their party's rather than a women's agenda and who conform to the standards and views of the (masculine) mainstream.

The third and fourth congresses adopted a more analytical approach to the themes, respectively, of The Power of the Women's Electorate and Transforming Politics. At the Third Asia-Pacific Congress of Women in Politics, in Fiji in 1996, Marilyn Waring shared her experiences as a young parliamentarian in New Zealand. Her paper highlighted the gender biases and outright discrimination that women could anticipate in politics, even in a developed Western context.

This congress emphasised the importance of building an informed and aware body of women electors who both understand and are able to articulate their issues as women. Women electors are not only the key to getting women into parliament but are also an essential mechanism that can empower women politicians to 'make a difference'. Margaret Shields, another former New Zealand MP, related how women politicians in the NZ Labour Party, seeking a more liberal abortion policy against the tide of male party opinion, had surveyed women party members. Their survey showed that the men's understanding of women electors' views was almost completely the opposite of women's actual opinions, and this enabled the women politicians to persuade their male colleagues to change their vote.

An aware and vocal body of women in all electorates, including those of male politicians, can enable the voices of even a minority of women politicians to be heard and respected in the parliament by their male colleagues. When women MPs express an opinion, whether on a women-specific issue or on a general issue from a women's perspective, male MPs will be obliged to take note if they realise that many women in their own electorates share these views. Thus, an active women's electorate can be a powerful force facilitating women's role in transforming politics.

The third and fourth congresses also moved towards recognising the importance of women as electors in ensuring another important plank of a transformative political agenda: that women politicians should be accountable to their constituents. Women in the region were no longer so sure that women politicians would remain 'better' than men. Many examples suggested that women could also be tainted by the and views of the (masculine) mainstream. Women in the region were no longer so sure that women politicians would remain 'better' than men. Many examples suggested that women could also be tainted by the male party system and understandings of women's issues and perspectives, most find little or no support and are forced to take up more mainstream positions and issues in order to have any impact in their chosen field. Thus, voters often find that the women they elected do not 'make a difference'. This may be reflected in a backlash in the vote for these or other women at subsequent elections. In such a hostile environment, the women politicians who survive in the longer term are likely to be those who push their party's rather than a women's agenda and who conform to the standards and views of the (masculine) mainstream.

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**Conclusion**

Has all this activity and networking produced concrete results? In a number of countries in the region, Women in Politics networks have been involved in gains in women's representation in politics. In India and elsewhere in South Asia, affirmative action has brought an unprecedented number of women into local politics. The Women in Politics networks, together with many other women's NGOs, have been involved in a massive training effort to assist these women to represent their sisters effectively. Changes in the political systems in the Philippines and Thailand have encouraged more women to stand for election, supported by NGO members of the Women in Politics networks. In the Philippines, a women's political party, Abanse Pinay, successfully contested and won a seat under the new system of representation for special interest groups. The Filipina members of CAPWIP were active in the campaign and the former president of the Global Women in Politics Network now chairs this party. In Fiji, a concerted campaign by women's groups across party lines, led by WIPPaC, saw eight women successfully elected and five of them enter the new cabinet, one in the position of deputy prime minister.

Thus, at the end of the twentieth century, women made quantitative gains in participation in politics in the Asia-Pacific region. Women's groups and Women in Politics networks have been working hard to put into effect their vision of transformative politics for the new millennium. In several cases, the gains were associated with changes in political systems. In others, effective training and networking enabled women to gain a place at the table in traditional political systems. In developing countries, in particular, the extent to which these quantitative gains can be translated into qualitative improvements in good governance will not depend on women's innate qualities as politicians. Rather, it will depend on the success of the women's movement in developing a strong and aware women's electorate to support women candidates, while at the same time holding them accountable for promoting women's issues and women's perspectives on all issues.

**Reference**

Introduction: Hearing Melanesian women

Bronwen Douglas, State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, The Australian National University

Gender and governance in practice
The papers in this section do not directly address the theme 'Gender and governance' – neither word is in familiar usage by the indigenous contributors, whose concern is particular local practice rather than universal theory. Each paper outlines the actual operation of a modest strategy or programme to enhance the skills, self-respect and community status and effectiveness of rural women in a Melanesian nation-state. Several papers propose policy implications of the particular cases discussed, and all make compelling arguments for the civic, social and moral importance of encouraging and tapping the capacities of village women. These papers are edited versions of presentations to a State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project workshop which was convened in November 1998 (Douglas 1999). The introduction examines the pertinence of the papers to global notions of 'gender' and 'governance' in the light of the workshop theme – Melanesian women as female persons, Christians and citizens in modern states.

Christianity in governance
The motif of Christianity permeates the papers, to the discomfort, perhaps, of the secular sensibilities of Western academics, non-church aid workers and donors. The emphasis on Christianity stemmed initially from my intellectual awareness that religion is central to Melanesian individual and collective lives and is attributed practical efficacy as well as spiritual significance. The theme, unusual in an academic setting, was enthusiastically embraced by Melanesian members of the workshop planning committee, and by most contributors.

Ruth Saovana-Spriggs – a Bougainvillean who returned to her island as an adviser on reconciliation and now works with the Bougainville People's Congress – describes Christianity as 'a cultural way of life' in Bougainville and chronicles a growing sense of the power of prayer during the recent ten-year civil war, manifest particularly in women's actions for peace and reconciliation. For Melanesians, prayer can be a pragmatic strategy mobilised to public and private ends. An example of the widespread Melanesian belief in the practical efficacy of prayer, Rona Nadile argues that Christian prayer was largely a 'custom or tradition' performed routinely by Melanesians in conjunction with daily activities (Nadile 1998). It is important that policy makers take Christianity seriously as a powerful cultural element in Melanesian governance, beyond the institutional frameworks for local administration and aid delivery provided by church organisations, regarded as non government organisations (NGOs).

Christianity, custom and modernity
Josephine Barnes is an Australian adult health educator with long experience as an aid worker in Solomon Islands. The Catholic Women's Program with which she works in Malaita is now largely conducted and controlled by Malaitan women. Barnes writes from an unquestioned Catholic perspective: she assumes the propriety of 'natural family planning' over other means of population control and ignores the indigenous methods, long proscribed by Christian missions, by which women once spaced births –
contraception, abortion, lengthy postpartum sexual abstinence, prolonged breast feeding. She also privileges 'Christian ideals' over 'customs that would otherwise constrain women'. Yet, to a more critical, feminist stance, present 'customs' like the restriction of women's movement to their natal or marital household, under the surveillance of suspicious, even paranoid men, look like modern products of the interplay over a century, to mainly male advantage, of two male-dominated ideologies: custom and Christianity.

On the other hand, Barnes tacitly acknowledges that Christianity meant new constraints for indigenous women and often reinforced local male control by obliterating zones of traditional female autonomy and repose, such as segregated housing and menstrual seclusion. It is important that secular or sectarian distaste at the seemingly partisan tone and politics of her paper should not efface its important story of indigenous women inspired by the Christian premise of equality; finding solace and confidence in Christian values and symbols; taking advantage of the actual plurality of the seemingly monolithic Catholic Church to seek modest, meaningful empowerment for rural women – just as women throughout Melanesia have always exploited Christianity to deflect male domination, Christian as well as customary.

The entanglement of custom and Christianity in modern Melanesian identity politics is an affront to romantic Western primitivism and Christian fundamentalism alike, and a paradox requiring explanation for anthropologists. These papers suggest that the relationship of custom and Christianity can also be problematic for indigenous people, not least because Christian practice is a now longstanding 'custom or tradition', a 'cultural way of life' in much of Melanesia, and because the concepts and content of 'custom' or 'tradition' are themselves diverse, shifting and contested. Custom is officially enshrined along with Christianity in Melanesian constitutions.

By contrast, Jean Tarissei – whose job as coordinator of the Women's Culture Project of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre is 'to revive, preserve and promote women's kastom ('custom')' – depicts a more mixed, contingent relationship between kastom, Christianity and modernity. Focusing on her island of Ambae, she stresses the variation in past and present attitudes to kastom of different denominations: the qualified toleration of the long-established Anglicans and Catholics; the gradual rehabilitation of kastom in the previously hostile Churches of Christ since the 1960s; the ongoing blanket opposition of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and Apostolic Churches; the looming threat to revitalised kastom from the fundamentalist intolerance of new evangelical and pentecostal churches. For Tarissei, kastom is 'the way of life which comes from our own place', the 'foundation of our identity', but its practice is dynamic as people add new things 'to try to make it relevant to life today'. Thus, the cost in pigs and mats of bride price is escalating in Ambae and kastom knowledge is taught in schools. Similarly, Enikelen Netine, who runs a rural adult literacy programme in Vanuatu, describes how Bislama, a non-traditional but national language, provides a stimulus to kastom: it 'opens the way for the preservation of indigenous culture and custom stories', ensuring their transmission to the young and raising cultural awareness and pride.

For Bougainvilleans, rediscovered custom knowledge was a matter of survival during the blockade of their island in the early 1990s and has since become a nostalgic source of cultural assurance, in apparently seamless relationship with a thoroughly indigenised Christianity: 'the years of fighting have given the people a more deeply meaningful relationship to their environment and indigenous identity', writes Saovana-Spriggs. Her account of the revival of customary self-sufficiency and traditional medicine in Bougainville also emphasises the adaptability of custom and its validation in practice as relevant and meaningful in profoundly altered modern settings. She makes a powerful plea that the acknowledged centrality of women in the domestic and local economies, their neglected customary authority as landowners in matrilineal societies, and their recent initiatives as peacemakers during the crisis should be mobilised at the island level of government to enable women to contribute and participate effectively 'in a world organised and managed by men' – including the 'well-meaning' outsiders currently flocking to Bougainville to assist in reconstruction. Saovana-Spriggs' case for the need to involve women in matters concerning exploitation of natural resources by external companies' seems incontrovertible, given the history of mining company involvement in Bougainville and the more recent story of Lihir told by Jacklynee Membup and Martha Macintyre, where once again local 'men assumed control in the negotiations with the [mining] company' and women's custodial rights to manage matrilineage land are ignored by both sides.

**Women, modernisation and empowerment**

Apart from the consciously secular and apolitical Women's Culture Project in Vanuatu, all the women's organisations and programmes discussed in these papers have strong church links, either direct or de facto via funding, training and personnel. This is a reminder that, in Melanesia, church women's wings and village women's groups continue to provide women's main opportunities for training, leadership, solidarity, networking and wider experience beyond the village and even beyond national borders. Barnes' paper looks specifically at a Catholic women's group which provides information, training and support otherwise unavailable to Malaitan women. The literacy programme in Vanuatu discussed by Netine was originally an initiative of the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union and is now managed by World Vision, with AusAID funding.

Theresia Hopkos, then president of the Ambunti District Council of Women (ADCW) in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea, says that very little government, donor or NGO funding filters down to rural women's groups or actual programmes in this vast riverine district, and that 'most of the services for women come from the churches, which provide a
dramatic source of education and knowledge'. She herself was trained as a leader and organiser by the SDA Church. Saovana-Spriggs describes how the churches by necessity filled the vacuum in civil government during the Bougainville crisis, altering people's attitudes and expectations about the church-government relationship. Women concentrated their efforts on social services, mediation and reconciliation, working through church organisations like the Catholic women's group formed in north Bougainville by 'Maria', who tells her story in the course of this paper. Men, by contrast, engaged in fighting and politics and now dominate the restored formal level of government.

Membup and Macintyre - respectively, a community relations worker for Lihir Gold and an anthropologist studying the social impact of mining - recount how Lihirian women also work from a church organisation base to devise strategies to cope with the speed and immensity of the social change and problems brought by a massive mining project, and to gain some access for women to the equivocal benefits of development. The women's vehicle in Lihir is a novel island-wide organisation called Petztorme, formed with mining company encouragement by the two major pre-existing church women's groups, whose bitter rivalry has since recurred in Petztorme and to an extent dissipated its effectiveness. Like Melanesian women generally, Lihirian women are not averse to modernisation on acceptable terms: they want to participate as much and as profitably as possible in the employment prospects opened up by mining, but face a double prejudice in the male-dominated culture of the global mining industry, which consigns women to low-paid menial positions, and in local men's resistance to any employment of women. In alliance with the women's section of the company's community relations department, which makes a major social contribution by promoting the value of education, Petztorme has campaigned with some success to increase women's participation in the workforce and to improve their access to training and thus better wages. To this point very few women in Lihir have skilled jobs, but they have earned a reputation as better, more careful and reliable workers than men. Employed women typically donate much of their earnings to church projects and women's groups, whereas men drink theirs in beer.

Membup and Macintyre paint an appalling picture of men catapulted into a 'fury of beer drinking' by the sudden availability of cash during the construction phase of the mine, and of the social disruption resulting from the ensuing epidemic of drunkenness and public violence. Petztorme's first project was to encourage women to work out culturally appropriate avenues of protection or refuge against alcohol-induced violence. Violence is a theme in several papers but none depicts women as its helpless victims: instead, they propose various pro-active counters to violence, including community accountability, self-help, painstaking mediation, and the assurance and respect women gain from literacy training and collective action.

Hopkos lists awareness programmes against domestic violence and sexual harassment as key ADCOW activities. Netine cites fervent testimonies by ni-Vanuatu women on the great benefits they have derived from literacy: access to valuable practical information; confidence, financial competence, business and leadership skills; greater community participation and cooperation. She sees female literacy as an antidote to domestic violence, having observed in some villages that 'before the men used to beat their wives, but today they have family worship together'. Saovana-Spriggs tells the story of 'Anna', who was badly beaten for taking a neutral stance as a health worker during the war in Bougainville but was later reconciled with her assailants in a large ceremony combining Christian and indigenous symbols of reconciliation. Saovana-Spriggs points to the difficult legacy of the culture of violence engendered in successive generations of young men by a decade of civil war and independence struggle - the lengthy campaign of 'Maria' and other women to 'bring back home' the young Bougainville Revolutionary Army men was a spiritual and psychological as well as a physical process.

Gender and governance

Throughout Melanesia, women's fellowship groups are key elements in effective village governance, while their integration in church and women's networks helps articulate the local with wider spheres in contexts where the state is locally absent or invisible, as is the case in much of rural Melanesia. Thus, programmes to develop women's personal confidence and skills, especially in literacy and numeracy, can have a dramatic impact on general community well-being: the literacy programme in Vanuatu is based on the premise that 'if all the women are literate the whole community will change for the better' and Netine says that it 'also led to improvement in community organisations'. She and Barnes stress the importance women place on participatory, cooperative teaching and learning. Both suggest that women's programmes are the best means to disseminate technical information at the grassroots about health, sanitation, nutrition, agriculture and business, using the familiar and the relevant as vehicles to convey new ideas. Barnes found it necessary to frame taboo subjects linked to female sexuality in Christian terms and to use Christian symbols to embolden young women to defy custom by assuming leadership roles. Reciprocally, Netine found that the most effective teaching materials for literacy classes were those providing information on kastom, health and other useful topics, since 'people learn to read better if the material provided is interesting or valuable to them'. In Lihir it is women who promote education and the availability of mining company scholarships to the community at large, and it is women's organisations that work to ameliorate the problems of drastic social inequality arising from the sudden but uneven injection of large amounts of cash.

In Melanesia, gender includes men in theory as well as in practice and gender relations are conceived in complementary rather than oppositional terms. To be acceptable and effective, therefore, programmes for women have to take account of men.

March 2000
Barnes commented in discussion at the workshop: 'You can’t run a women’s programme without information for men as well. So I’m running [a men’s programme] surreptitiously on the side.' Netine stresses cooperation and the interdependence of person and community. The literacy programme in Vanuatu focuses on women because their need is greatest—they comprised nearly three-quarters of the participants in 1997–98—but ‘the development of our human resources is a national priority’ and literacy is a human right. There is no conventional feminist agenda in these papers, and yet all in their way are iconoclastic. Tarisesi writes about *kastom* in general and not just women’s *kastom,* but her paper affirms the centrality of women in Ambae *kastom,* because mats, which are women’s products, are fundamental objects in customary exchanges. The acknowledgement of certain women’s activities, such as mat making in Ambae, as true *kastom* has enhanced the confidence, self-esteem and community reputation of women, but there was nothing automatic about the process: for 15 years the *kastom* promoted and revived by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre was a male preserve.

**Policy implications**

The major implication drawn from these papers, and from the workshop to which they were originally presented, is of the need to listen to people and provide digestible, relevant information about alternative choices and strategies, rather than to lecture them on the basis of universalised ethnocentric notions of efficiency and propriety. For example, as Barnes implies, the fact that indigenous women and men alike place great value on producing many children should be correlated with ongoing high infant and child mortality and the relatively recent experience of more or less massive depopulation rather than be condemned as a tenacious ‘tradition’ at odds with the modern demographic orthodoxy of wealthy donor countries and global agencies. Well-meaning efforts to ameliorate the evident drudgery of rural women in much of Melanesia should not lose sight of the value they place on hard work and fine gardens. Alice Aruheeta Pollard from Malaita, then head of the Women’s Development Division in Solomon Islands, warned the workshop: ‘We see women’s role or the load that women are carrying, we see them as overburdened, or too much load. But again when you look very closely at their attitudes to their role and their behaviour, actually it is their pride, it is their status, it is for their survival, and also it is ownership.’ Similarly, and often to the frustration of well-meaning Western feminists, most Melanesian women advocate a gradualist strategy to address the very real disadvantages of women, stressing that it is important not to threaten or alienate men but to gain their support and cooperation. Angela Mandie-Filer, a PhD student from Ambunti, commented at the workshop on the ADCOW agenda: ‘I think it just needed one or two men to come out and support the women and you have the whole lot of them coming out to support, so it’s this peer group judgement and peer group pressure on the men ... In that area the men actually are very supportive.’

In practical terms, the major problems faced by the organisations and programmes discussed in these papers are those of resources, skills, funding and sustainability. Such problems stem ultimately from the financial exigency afflicting all Melanesian countries, but particularly from the low priority given by governments and most aid donors to non-formal education for adults, especially in the rural sector and especially for women. Even programmes which have received external funding, such as the Vanuatu literacy programme and Women’s Culture Project, are of relatively low priority locally and have no guarantee of ongoing support. Hopkos makes a plea for modest financial backing for local women’s groups, associations and leaders, and the grassroots training and awareness programmes they seek to implement. She concludes her paper thus: ‘as women in Papua New Guinea, especially in the rural remote areas, we see ourselves first, then the churches and then the nation. We get less as citizens and serve more as Christians and citizens, and get served as women the least.’ It is in the interests of all parties that this should not continue to be so: better ways are needed to extend effective citizenship to rural Melanesian women and to supplement their home-grown resourcefulness with earmarked funding, training and support.

**References**


The Catholic women’s group, Auki, Malaita: A catalyst for change

Josephine Barnes, Catholic Women’s Program, Auki, Malaita, Solomon Islands

From colony to nation: Changing contexts of aid

In 1964 I went as a volunteer to teach at the isolated Catholic mission station of Rokera in Malaita, in the then British Protectorate, now independent nation of Solomon Islands. In those days, staff had to speak English to the students and had minimal involvement with local people. As a woman I could not move about alone and was mainly confined to the mission stations. After three years I went back to Australia to train as a nurse, intending to return to the Solomons. I could not then see any value in teaching, as most subjects seemed far removed from the reality of people’s lives. It was probably my youth that blinded me to the benefits of education, since pupils from this school later obtained responsible jobs. Nursing, on the other hand, showed immediate results. In 1986, after cyclone Namu, I returned to do relief work in Avu Avu on the weather (east) coast of Guadalcanal. Many changes had occurred. I was greeted warmly and each day the women would talk or ‘story’ with me about their concerns for their children and their own health. The time seemed ripe for health education. In 1996 Patricia Wale, the coordinator of the Catholic Women’s Program in Auki diocese, Malaia, invited me back to work as an adult educator.

Kastom in Malaita

To understand the lives of rural women on Malaita, one needs to go back at least a century. I am not an expert on kastom (‘custom’) but have gained a general idea from the women with whom I work and during my long association with Solomon Islanders. Customs vary between places and islands. The traditional lifestyle was still practised in parts of Malaita in 1964, and is in isolated places to this day. Malaita is a patrilineal society: descent and inheritance ideally follow the male line and men live and cooperate with their patrilineal kinsmen. Settlements were laid out as follows. The priest, the medium of communication with the ancestral spirits whose support was essential to survival, lived removed from the people. He passed information to the men and boys through selected men. Below them lived the women, girls and young children. The women cooked for the men, but husbands did not share houses with their wives and female children. They visited their wives, while couples also met in the gardens. Women usually gave birth alone, in the bush or in a birth hut. Menstruating women could not go to the gardens but lived in the menstrual hut, bisi, a place of rest and socialisation. Traditionally, men walked with their hands free to protect women going to and from the gardens. Women carried all the produce and firewood on their backs. Young girls minded the young children in the villages. The women did all the cooking, cleaning, child care, planting and harvesting. The men cleared the ground for gardens, built the houses and planned village life. They were the politicians. Infringements of custom could mean severe punishment: if compensation was not paid in pigs or, in some areas, shell money, death might be the penalty.

Modernity, Christianity and gender relations

With the coming of Europeans in the late nineteenth century, new needs demanded cash: men cut copra for sale or signed as indentured labourers for plantations in Queensland and Fiji. Since custom prohibited sexual relations with breastfeeding women, young fathers happily left their families to work overseas. About a century ago, Catholic and other missionaries began to preach their faith and set up schools and hospitals. Many people moved from their villages to the security of the mission stations, which offered medicines and a firm but loving God who seemed more powerful than the jealous, punitive ancestors. The mission God could also punish in the next life, but that was not immediate. Missionaries preached equality in the sight of God, so that women could now enter the church, the sacred place, and participate in prayer.

Christian villagers were no longer separated by gender but grouped into family villages. These days young boys often still live separately from the family, but fathers are members and heads of households. Yet custom still rules the division of labour and the women’s workload has increased — men insist it is customary for them to carry nothing, but women no longer get a break from the gardens each month in the bisi. Modern tools mean larger gardens, marketing means potential sale of surplus production, and women are urged to work harder to produce more. School fees are a tremendous burden, especially on women. Infant mortality has declined, though it is still among the highest in the Pacific Islands. (In 1997 the official infant mortality rate for Malaita was 14.7 deaths per 1,000 births, but the Medical Director of Malaita places the figure nearer 30 per 1,000.) Yet more children survive, families are bigger and the population is increasing rapidly — half are under 15. Arable land is harder to find and located further from the villages, which further increases the routine workload of women.
Family planning, including the 'natural' methods permitted by the Catholic Church, is not well accepted by Malaitans. Medical personnel and educators advocate population control but seem not to understand the people's need for a strong line to provide for the elderly in the absence of social security. Men expect many children in return for paying bride price. Wives agree and are proud when the arrival of their first child demonstrates their fertility. At a 1998 workshop, women and men alike rejected sterilisation: even women with many children did not want to lose the chance for more, while men were appalled by the thought of vasectomy. Most people have lost siblings or children and know that children still die from diarrhoea, malaria, pneumonia, measles and other diseases. My neighbour, one of nine children, had lost a 6-year-old sister and a 5-year-old brother. Most women have similar stories.

Despite the desire for children, there is general concern at the rise in school fees, the number of aimless young people and social problems. Men, in particular, often drink to excess, physically abuse women and children, and get involved in gambling and scam financial schemes. They seem lost, exercising power over women in ridiculous ways: at a church blessing ceremony in one village, the chiefs imposed compensation of SI$250 on any woman who entered wearing shorts or with their hair in a pineapple topknot. Men feel they are losing control over their wives and teenage children, who leave for the capital, Honiara, to go to school or to work for 'Master Liu' ('do nothing').

Sexually transmitted diseases are increasing. Employed men often have sex with teenage girls seeking financial gain. Parents, intimidated because their children have more formal education, are loath to tell them the facts of life. In a group of 61 18–21-year-olds attending a young women's leadership programme in May 1998, only four had received any information about menstruation. Solomon Islanders seem far more aware of changes to their bodies than their European counterparts but most lack knowledge as to why such changes occur. Because these subjects are taboo, a series of lessons to women and girls was called 'I am a miracle', and began: 'God made us and it was good.' Phrased in this way, reproductive health, anatomy and physiology could be taught and were eagerly learned.

I became aware of the need to frame these topics in Christian terms during that leadership programme. I could not get across the concept of friendship with boys as getting to know them during that leadership programme. I could not get across the concept of friendship with boys as getting to know them within their zones. The women's groups obviously met a felt need, as they grew far more quickly than envisaged. There are now 135 groups, with about 2,000 women involved. The other two Catholic dioceses in the Solomons have followed suit.

But the churches are struggling. In the past they ran schools and hospitals and had a great deal of influence over the lives of the people. Aid poured in through the overseas church organisations. With independence in 1978, most schools and hospitals were handed over to the government. Collections for missions fell overseas as congregations declined in the mainstream churches. Aid organisations began to channel income-generating projects through the churches, but such projects often have little relevance to the churches as such, while administration and maintenance of existing structures are unfunded. Foreign aid agencies have their own criteria to meet, but their knowledge of local issues and customs is often not great.

**Empowering village women**

This was the environment in which the Catholic Women's Program was set up in Auki diocese in 1990, with two local nuns and an expatriate woman as early facilitators. Initially, the group held consultative meetings to assess the needs of village people and discovered that women wanted to share their problems. In the security of their peers, they felt free to acknowledge their difficult lot and cried as they told stories of hardship and helplessness. The measure of a workshop's success was inclusion in the leader's report of the phrase, 'the women cried'. The leaders believed they had struck an empathetic chord. Since normally a woman cannot leave her house without her husband's permission, 'Husbands' Awareness Programs' had to be held to persuade them to allow their wives to attend women's meetings.

The Catholic Women's Program is overseen by a central diocesan team based in Auki, the provincial centre of Malaita. With leadership of the programme shifting to local women, Patricia Wale became coordinator of a team of three Malaitans. There are nine parishes covering limited accessible areas. Parish coordinators lead zone leaders belonging to villages within their zones. The women's groups obviously met a felt need, as they grew far more quickly than envisaged. There are now 135 groups, with about 2,000 women involved. The other two Catholic dioceses in the Solomons have followed suit.

Initially, the teaching was participatory, with sharing of stories, role-plays, dramas, singing, practical demonstrations of gardening skills, sewing, and so on. Such activities empowered women, who learned to speak up for themselves. But when topics on the role of women were introduced, leaders could no longer simply share with their listeners the pain of their lot in life but required training in the concepts to be imparted. Accordingly, leaders' training workshops were held. So-called 'Empowerment Topics' - 'The Role of Women', 'The Ministry of Women', 'Basic Christian Communities' - helped remind women of their importance in the very fabric of their society. Topics on health, hygiene and child development were introduced because the Medical Director of Malaita believed the leaders of the Women's Program to be the best means yet tried to impart health knowledge at the grassroots. Members of other churches could
attending workshops and in some cases the 'hidden' or heathen people came, to learn how to prevent their children from dying of diseases such as diarrhoea and malaria.

A booklet was produced from *Facts for life*, a UNICEF/WHO publication. The leaders requested charts to assist in their presentations. The charts were written in English by expatriates. Yet about 85 per cent of Malaita women are illiterate and few speak English. The spoken word is the normal medium for transferring information and even knowledge of *Pidgin* is confined to areas close to roads and towns. Participatory methods were being overshadowed by print, again disempowering women who said they were 'Rubbish women' because they could not read or write. Pictorial charts to match the health booklet have since been produced for all groups. Drawing and mapping are part of the workshops and are enjoyed by the women. The method is again participatory, with women doing most of the teaching to each other. In 1998 the main leaders were the zone leaders, rather than those centrally located. They receive training and return to the local villages to follow the same methods, teaching in local languages rather than in English or *Pidgin*. In recent consultations, women expressed a need for further education in social issues. If teaching aids can be developed to enable them to teach each other, the groups will surge ahead. Women are overjoyed when they realise they do not need to be literate to take an active part. Most photographs taken now show women laughing.

Family planning is presented as the 'Strong Line Plan', with 'natural' methods demonstrated in pictorial form. Husbands have been very interested in the workshops on women's and men's anatomy, the miracle of life, and natural family planning. They demanded to be part of a recent workshop, but women will not talk about these matters in front of men, and men completely dominate a group if they join it. So the men had separate sessions. Women want the men to attend: although women are articulate in their own groups, they still seem unable individually to communicate their feelings and wishes to their husbands but believe they can do so collectively. There is a growing emphasis in the Catholic Church on groups such as a 'Family Life Program' and 'Marriage Encounter', which are useful to the literate and are helping to change family relationships, but the women's groups provide the best chance to make a difference to the lives of village women.

Recently, the young women leaders told me they could not lead. It is difficult for a Malaitan woman to be a leader, as she is not supposed to put herself out in front of others. I turned to their faith for strength. Christ brought the light of knowledge into the world, and they too can carry his light. If you put a cover over a candle, it will go out. So, they must take off the shield or cover they are hiding under and carry the light of knowledge to others. They took home a candle to light during their talks to remind them of this and give them courage. Thus, Christian ideals and symbols can be used to override customs that would otherwise constrain women.

To be empowered, women need to want to leave the harsh, but secure, domain of customary constraints and move along the hard, uncertain road to change. This means applying the skills they have learned to family life. It means standing up for what they believe in a society where they have never had a public voice. Empowerment is about finding the strength to bring about change. If laughter is a gauge of success, then the Catholic Women's Program of Auki diocese has so far been a resounding success.

March 2000
Today is not the same as yesterday, and tomorrow it will be different again: Kastom in Ambae, Vanuatu

Jean Tarisesei, Women’s Culture Project, Vanuatu Cultural Centre

Introduction

I come from the island of Ambae in north Vanuatu, though since 1992 I have lived in Port Vila, the capital, and worked at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, where I am coordinator of the Women’s Culture Project. In this paper I discuss kastom (‘custom’) in my island, its importance for women, its relationship to Christianity and politics, and the recent upsurge of interest in women’s kastom encouraged by the Women’s Culture Project. My role is to revive, preserve and promote women’s kastom. In my work I travel to many islands, including Ambae.

Ambae is a volcanic island about 40 kilometres long. The people live in villages in a number of districts. They are subsistence farmers who grow their own food in gardens and keep pigs, chickens and cattle. They also have coconut plantations from which they make copra to earn a little money. There are two main languages. Today, people travel in and around Ambae on trucks, small boats and aeroplanes. In the north, travel is very difficult because a volcano makes the land very steep. Many people from Ambae live in other parts of Vanuatu, especially Port Vila and Santo. There are many primary schools in Ambae and three secondary schools.

Kastom in Ambae

Kastom is a term in Bislama, the national language of Vanuatu, that means the way of life in which we grew up and which we still practise. So the kastom of Ambae is the things we do that come from Ambae. This is hard to explain in English, because the term ‘custom’ lacks the idea of close association with a place. People today are trying to find ways to fit kastom together with the new things that have come into our lives. So the kastom that we now practise is not the same as it was before. People are changing it and adding new things. One of the most important influences on kastom has been the churches.

People in Ambae use the word kastom to mean ceremonies, stories, songs, dances and certain ways of cooking; traditional knowledge and sacred places; family organisation (or kinship) and traditional leaders or chiefs; as well as Ambae mats, pigs and other such things. The main ceremonies practised are welcoming ones for newborn babies, adoptions, marriages, rank ceremonies based on pig-killing, rank ceremonies based on mats, and funerals. Many take place over a number of days, which we count in groups of five. This is especially so in funeral ceremonies, when for 100 days after the person’s death we mark each fifth day by cooking special food: on the 50th day, for example, we cook things we have caught in the sea, such as fish and crabs. Food is a very important part of kastom. So is our vernacular language, which has words to describe all the kastom things we do that are hard to express in English.

Women and kastom

Mats, which are very important in all these kastom ceremonies, are the main work of women in Ambae. Before Western influences came, women mostly made mats and took care of pigs and babies. The main work for men was growing food and protecting the community. Once children grew big enough to walk about, small boys became the responsibility of their fathers, while girls were cared for by their mothers, who started to teach them how to make mats and the other things that girls needed to learn. Today, women do most of the work within the family and the community, while men are more often also involved in politics and business.

Marriages were arranged when girls were quite small, sometimes even before they were born, and when they reached the age of about 12 years they often went to live with their husband’s mother in order to get used to their new family. But they did not marry or live with their husbands until they reached puberty. We Ambaeans divide ourselves into two groups named Tagaro and Merumbuto, which anthropologists call moieties: people must always marry someone from the other group. Parents tried to make sure their daughters married into a family that was close both in terms of place and kinship. It was hard for a married girl to move to a place a long way away from her own parents. Ideally she should marry into her mother’s family in order to keep the family and the land together. Today, most young people choose their own partners, and sometimes girls marry to faraway places and not into their mother’s family. This often causes problems with marriages, because they have not followed the correct kastom road. In such cases, there are often disputes about land and much talk, gossip and other trouble.

Churches and kastom

Virtually all Ambaeans, like most ni-Vanuatu, are members of a Christian church. Historically, and still today, the attitudes towards kastom of the various denominations have varied widely. The Anglican Church established the first Christian mission in Ambae in the 1870s. The Anglicans did not make too many
changes. They stopped some things which were not good, such as murder and cannibalism, and some things that were hurtful, such as the tattooing of young girls. They also tried to change aspects of the men's rank system, huge. Today, kastom is still strongly alive in Anglican communities. The Catholic Church arrived next. They settled in only two areas and did not spread beyond them. Their impact is mainly on language because they mostly use French. They did not oppose kastom strongly in other ways, apart from harmful aspects.

The Churches of Christ were the third church to arrive, in about 1900. They became the second largest denomination in the island, spreading into many areas. They stopped almost every traditional practice, such as kastom dances and pig-killings. They did allow kastom marriage ceremonies to continue, including central aspects such as the bride's pig-killing and the exchanges between the two families. Because pig-killing was an integral part of the marriage exchanges, the Churches of Christ permitted women's participation in the rank system to continue, at the same time that they stopped men's participation in the graded society. During the independence movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the pro-kastom Nagriamel movement had a significant impact on the Churches of Christ in Ambae, and as a result they became much more supportive of kastom. Nowadays, church members are trying to bring back men's pig-killings.

The Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church was the fourth to arrive in Ambae. The SDAs are not widespread, but their effect on kastom was worse than that of the Churches of Christ. They banned everything except the weaving of mats. It is good that weaving is permitted, because at least it enables SDAs to continue to participate in ceremonies organised by Ambaeans belonging to other denominations. They can thus be involved in the marriages of family members outside the SDA Church, because they can still contribute to the exchanges by giving mats.

The next church to come was the Apostolic Church, in about 1960. It is mainly limited to one district. Members do not even know how to weave Ambaean mats, although they make floor and sleeping mats in a different style. Women learn how to weave in the women's groups organised by their church, and they make baskets, mats, table mats and purses in styles not just of other islands in Vanuatu, but also of Fiji and other parts of the Pacific.

After independence in 1980, and especially since 1990, many small, mostly pentecostal churches have arrived in Ambae, almost all strongly opposed to kastom. There have also been splits in the existing denominations, especially the Churches of Christ and the Apostolic Church. Anglicans, by contrast, tend to switch parish affiliations rather than leave the church. As a result, there are many small churches in Ambae today, but the main ones are Anglican, Churches of Christ and SDA. The Anglican Church achieved its own independence from expatriate control in the 1980s and now all church officials are ni-Vanuatu. The Churches of Christ and the Apostolic Church are also mainly managed by ni-Vanuatu but are influenced by visitors from outside the country, as is the SDA Church. The Catholic Church now also has local staff, both priests and nuns, but a few European nuns and priests continue to work throughout the country.

Women in island organisation

Vanuatu has six provinces. Ambae is in Penama Province, along with the islands of Maewo and Pentecost. The provincial headquarters are at Saratamata in East Ambae. The Penama Provincial Council has 15 elected and seven nominated members. The elected members are almost always men, because there are few female candidates in elections and even fewer are successful. The nominated members include one woman's and two youth representatives, as well as representatives of the chiefs and the churches. There is a Women's Office and a Youth Office at Saratamata. As well as the Provincial Council, Ambae has an Island Council of Chiefs, the members of which are elected by the chiefs of all the villages around the island. Chiefs are always men.

Women have their own island council called Vavine bulu, meaning 'women together'. Women in all the villages elect representatives to the council, which meets three or four times per year, according to need. The executive of Vavine bulu meets more regularly, and representatives from Vavine bulu attend the biannual conference of the Vanuatu National Council of Women (VNCW), a non-government organisation. The VNCW runs various awareness programmes to promote women in the villages, and to help them with health, business, sewing, water supply, and so on. The VNCW is mostly concerned with women's development, but Ambae women are also interested in their kastom. Vavine bulu promotes mat-making and this is important, because as long as you have mats you can take part in ceremonies.

At the village level, women's groups may be organised by the churches or by the women's network, but usually there is only one women's group in each village and it is that group which sends representatives to Vavine bulu. In Ambae, the government works closely with the church organisations and people do not notice much difference between church and government. They are more interested in what both can achieve.

Kastom today

The character of kastom is always the same, but the ways in which we practise it change. For example, in kastom marriages in the past, we exchanged women for just a few mats and pigs. But nowadays we pay for women with pigs and up to 20 of the most valuable mats. We also have church ceremonies as part of the marriage so that now we make two feasts, one for kastom and one for the church. This makes it hard for some people, because marriage has become very expensive. Since not every woman can make a mat, marriage is sometimes even more expensive because people have to buy mats.

The education of children in kastom ways used to take place at home. From an early age, children were taught how to do
things like weaving and dancing. But now children go to school and lack the opportunity to learn all these skills. Today, some schools are trying to introduce *kastom* into the classroom. In one village, the teachers have invited some older people to come and teach *kastom*. The children are now learning how to weave mats, as well as learning *kastom* stories, songs and dances.

Today, in Ambae, *kastom* is being revived in many such ways. The effect of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre programmes has been to renew people's interest in *kastom*. The Women's Culture Project programme, which Lissant Bolton and I implemented in Ambae in 1991–92 and have since introduced to other islands, has helped legitimate the things women do as true *kastom*, whereas previously it was regarded as men's business. This has increased the self-esteem and self-confidence of women and in Ambae has encouraged them to revive styles of mats which they had stopped making. Ambae people now recognise the need to use more mats in ceremonies, instead of money, and this in turn enhances the reputation and self-respect of women.

In the future, I think there will be more new ways to teach *kastom* to our young people. However, it is hard to know what the effect of the new churches will be. Many of the new denominations are very strongly opposed to *kastom* and will try to defeat these attempts to stimulate it if they come to Ambae. If there is no opposition from the churches, *kastom* will continue to be revived, even though it will continue to change. People are changing *kastom* in order to try to make it relevant to life today. It has to fit in with church, government, education and development. The work of the cultural centre is to try to make sure that *kastom* remains a strong force in the lives of ni-Vanuatu. We believe that it is a strong foundation of our identity. If we don't have *kastom*, we are nobody – we don't know where we come from or where we are going.
A literacy programme for women in Vanuatu

Enikelen Netine, Melanesian Literacy Program, World Vision, Vanuatu

Rita's story

Since 1989 I have been working in a literacy programme in Vanuatu. I start my paper by sharing Rita's experience with literacy training in Bislama, the national language. Her story shows how literacy can have a powerful effect on a woman, her family and her community. Rita is from a village in northwest Malakula. She is 40 years old and married, with six children. She grew up in a bush area of Malakula and married a man from the same area. Rita and her husband left their village in the bush to come to a village near the salt water.

When I first met Rita in 1989 she was very shy. She was afraid to talk to me because she couldn't understand or speak Bislama. I went to the village to start a literacy programme and Rita joined the course. She learned Bislama and it changed her life. She gained a new, positive feeling about herself and was able to help her children at school and also to help her community. After she learned Bislama we could talk. Her husband also joined the programme and became a leader in the community and the Presbyterian Church. Rita started a Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union (PWMU) group in the village. People are now working together in the village and literacy classes are well attended. The area of health has also seen some very important changes, especially water and sanitation. The women themselves built a water tank in their village.

Rita's family has now started a small business based on their earnings from copra and cocoa. Rita has also started a business in second-hand clothes and she sells them in Norsup, which is an hour away by truck from her village. She uses the money to pay the school fees for her children, three of whom are attending secondary school. Rita is now a very confident woman and a community leader.

Influences on literacy

Literacy in the early days was a means to evangelise and establish the church. The early missionaries used literacy to teach the people to understand the Bible in their own languages. They trained people to read and write, whatever their age group. This system was changed when the French and British condominium created parallel but separate institutions that affected all aspects of life, including education. While the lingua franca is Bislama, English and French continue to be spoken because of the Western-style formal education introduced by missionaries and colonial authorities. Even now, French and English schools exist side by side, although the government has pushed to unify the education system. But there are still two systems and access to formal education has been limited despite government efforts to improve participation rates. Today the adult literacy rate in Vanuatu is very low, especially among women. Some islands have a lower rate than others, while overall the estimated figure is lowest in the rural area where 82 per cent of the population live.

Development of our human resources is a national priority. Yet, although one of the government's objectives is to realise the potential of women as partners in and beneficiaries of the development process, there is very little government support or funds for non-formal education for adults, especially women.

The Melanesian Literacy Program

In our literacy work we use Bislama as the main language. Although it is not a traditional language, Bislama also opens the way for the preservation of indigenous culture and custom stories. The Melanesian Literacy Program was designed to address the low literacy rates in rural areas and was an offshoot of an initiative of the PWMU in 1989. That initiative was a response to the problem raised by a women's group in northwest Malakula that they could not effectively undertake church work because they could not read, write or understand Bislama. They had indicated their interest in forming a local PWMU but needed assistance in order to be able to communicate and learn to assume leadership roles. In 1989 the PWMU head office in Port Vila appointed me as deaconess to teach these women how to speak, read and write in Bislama.

The literacy programme is managed by World Vision and began with assistance from the Australian Government, through AusAID, as part of its commitment to the UN International Year of Literacy (1990). It has been conducted in isolated areas on eight islands in Vanuatu: Torres, Santo, Maewo, Pentecost, Malakula and Ambrym, in the north; Epi, in central Vanuatu; and Tanna, in the south. The programme covers and builds skills in leading group discussion, small-business skills, agriculture, nutrition, handicrafts, cooking, writing stories, appropriate technology, critical literacy, and translation.

The long-term goal of the Melanesian Literacy Program is to enable illiterate women and youth in isolated areas of Vanuatu to be literate in the national language Bislama, and to be able to use their literacy skills to meet their personal and community goals. The objectives are to:
• select and train village volunteers as literacy trainers;
• produce and disseminate stories on culture and customs, songs and local history, and information on health, nutrition and other topics useful to the villages;
• integrate literacy work with health, agriculture and other educational areas to increase community understanding and benefits;
• strengthen community organisation by effective use of meetings; and
• enable documentation of minutes and production of other written materials.

The rationale has been that:
• literacy enhances people's communication skills, quality of life and understanding of their world;
• non-literate adults are disadvantaged in communication outside their area and in economic, social and political developments, especially if they know only the local language;
• literacy training not only enables adults to become literate in Bislama, but the integration of literacy training with information on health and nutrition, agriculture and other interesting and useful topics gives people more confidence in coping with the changes in their world;
• literacy permits more effective liaison with government staff at national and local levels, especially regarding awareness-raising activities; and
• participants are involved in the production of custom stories, songs and local histories, which raise awareness of and pride in local culture and customs.

Positive outcomes

The programme outcomes have been very encouraging. The ability to read and write in Bislama has given access to new information, ideas and opportunities. It is generally believed that to learn to read and to write is the key to new knowledge. Women have discovered for themselves a new way of life and have expressed how literacy has had significant effects on their lives in the following ways:
• Economic: literacy has improved their capacity to do business.
• Community and leadership: communication and cooperation within and among villages has improved, with greater knowledge and skills. Leaders are able to improve the facilitation of community activities with the active participation of community members in group processes.
• Spiritual: literacy has enabled them to assume leadership roles in the church.
• Health: literacy has resulted in improvements in waste disposal, access to safe water, improved food storage and handling, and increased knowledge in child health care.
• Confidence: literacy has given them the confidence to express their views and to speak in public. They have also taken leadership roles and have been actively taking part in decision making.

The project was successful in achieving most of its objectives. A total of 53 volunteers were recruited and trained. In 1997–98 these trainers were able to conduct 45 classes, attended by 600 trainees, in 56 areas throughout Vanuatu. The number of trainees has changed each year, as the woman gained what they wanted. Some took up leadership roles in their communities, some learned to speak Bislama well enough to be able to migrate to the two towns, Port Vila and Santo, for work, and some, like Rita, have gone into small business.

The Maewo experience

In 1996 a member of the World Vision staff surveyed members of the literacy class in Maewo (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Island</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Classes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malakula</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrym</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epi</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanna</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanna</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santo</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santo</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maewo</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 Results of the literacy programme in Maewo, 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual outcomes</th>
<th>Community outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I can teach little children at preschool</td>
<td>1. People can follow other speakers well in meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I can read my Bible in church</td>
<td>2. Helps build cooperation among communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I can read with comprehension, whereas before I could not understand everything I read</td>
<td>3. Helps share responsibilities and leadership roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I can write about my feelings and express my views</td>
<td>4. Gives a better understanding of health hazards and sanitation issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can access information on subject matters such as health, agriculture, nutrition, and so on</td>
<td>5. Helps share responsibilities in church activities and enables everyone to participate in community work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Literacy helps me to be a leader in the community</td>
<td>6. Enables those who attend meetings to take on responsibilities and leadership roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Literacy helps me manage my family, marriage and income</td>
<td>7. The wife becomes one of those in the home who can write and manage the family’s well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I can read and write, which gives me confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I am now old and now I can read and write, which helps me record my culture and custom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. We can read newspapers and other information materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. We can sing better than before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. We can draw better pictures, which surprised our community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. We can calculate our own vatu (‘money’) in stores</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I can help my children to start a small business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I have written a letter for the first time to a friend in Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Literacy makes a difference

In spite of resource limitations, the project was able to produce and disseminate literacy materials on customs, culture, health and nutrition and other topics useful to the villages — working on the basis that people learn to read better if the material provided is interesting or valuable to them. Literacy materials were developed during training sessions. Government agencies and NGOs were also tapped for resource materials on health, agriculture and the environment. Practical material like this was integrated into literacy work whenever possible and made a difference to the quality of life in participating villages. However, such integration depended on the availability of learning materials and the capacity of trainers to handle a diverse range of subject matter.

Apart from developing personal skills and confidence, especially among women, literacy also led to improvement in community organisations by enhancing leaders’ skills and encouraging them to be more open to active participation in community affairs by other villagers, including women.

Some important changes in community life have taken place where literacy classes are operating. I have observed the following in several villages:

- before, only young boys played sport, but today everyone, old and young, men and women, play sport together;
- before, only fathers and (male) catechists shared in worship, but today they share the responsibilities with family and community members, including women;
- before, women didn’t know how to change money, but today many run small businesses and shops.

Many villages have improved in terms of the number of good houses built. Some women have now learned to make a smokeless stove. Some have water tanks for clean water. Many take part in decision making in their homes and communities; some have the chance of taking up leadership roles in their communities. They have formed themselves into groups to work together, in order to strengthen themselves spiritually, socially, physically and mentally. One of the most important changes is that these women want to do outreach in other areas. They know how to read and write and have the confidence to convince others about what they know and what they can do.

Conclusion

We believe that if all the women are literate the whole community will change for the better. When a woman is literate there is a change in the family which enables it to play a more active part in the community development process. Most of all, there is a change in the woman, giving her a feeling of hope and achievement.
The Ambunti District Council of Women: Achievements and problems

Theresia Hopkos, Ambunti District Council of Women, Papua New Guinea

Introduction

Papua New Guinea has more than 700 languages with complicated cultures and customs. Ambunti District, in East Sepik Province, alone has ten different languages. I come from a Kwoma-speaking area. This paper represents Papua New Guinean women from Ambunti District, in particular, but more generally from the vast, rural, remote areas, rather than the urban centres.

I am president of the Ambunti District Council of Women (ADCOW), which was formed in 1993 and is affiliated with the East Sepik Council of Women (ESCOW). The Ambunti council 'has been built from the bottom up. Leadership plus programme initiatives and directions have emerged from the rural villages' (Nakikus et al. 1991:145). My role is to coordinate and organise district executive meetings on a quarterly basis and to facilitate the implementation of awareness programmes within the respective area associations to which individual women belong (see Table 1).

ADCOW organisational structure

The district executive comprises a president, a vice-president and a secretary or administrative assistant. Area association executives consist of a president, a vice-president and a secretary-treasurer. The 11 area associations each comprise 10–30 women's groups and each group consists of 50–100 individual members. They are all well established and functioning to date.

Awareness programmes

Because most village women are illiterate, there is a need for awareness programmes. Those supported by ADCOW include health education, political education, and campaigns of social action, especially against domestic violence. The awareness programme in health education teaches:

- good nutrition: that children must be properly fed;
- child care: that children must be properly cared for;
- sanitation: the importance of cleanliness in the home and the village; and
- water supply: the importance of providing good drinking water.

Political education programmes are mainly about voter education and raising village women's awareness of their political rights, such as:

- the right to vote for the candidate of their choice;
- learning who their government representatives are, in the Ambunti District as well as at provincial and national levels; and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number of women's groups</th>
<th>Approx. female population (potential membership)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Avatip</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ambunti Rural</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ambunti Urban</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Black Wara</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Numau</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wogomus</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Upper Sepik</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Iwam</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Wasam</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>May River</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Hunstein Range</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2  Field visits from Ambunti District centre: distances, modes of transport, time taken, and costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the centre to</th>
<th>Distance (km)</th>
<th>By motor canoe</th>
<th>By paddling</th>
<th>By walking</th>
<th>Return cost (kina)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avatip</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40 mins</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td>Unnecess.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambunti Rural*</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>8 hrs</td>
<td>+1 hr</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Wara*</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>3.5 hrs</td>
<td>12 hrs</td>
<td>12 hrs</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numau*</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>6 hrs</td>
<td>2.5 days</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wogornus</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>8 hrs</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Sepik</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2.5 hrs</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iwam</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>9 hrs</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wasam</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>9 hrs</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May River</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>12 hrs</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunstein</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>8 hrs</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>Not poss.</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Often all three modes of transport are needed, depending on river and lake levels.

- knowing who their prime minister is, and so forth.

The aims of awareness programmes against domestic violence are to:

- bring public censure on husbands who beat their wives excessively, sometimes killing them or causing desperate women to commit suicide;
- encourage women's awareness of what is happening in the village; women should know that death is not an end to any or every problem; and
- oppose the sexual harassment that leads to 15-year-old girls being forced to marry older men, and women of 55–60 years having to remarry against their will.

Activities, goals, capacities and limitations

Area association presidents play a major role in organising women's groups in their respective associations. The women are advised to share their knowledge and skills in making handicrafts with group members, so that every woman learns different styles and methods of making *bilumi* ('string bags') and of weaving mats and baskets.

Ambunti District is unlike most other inland districts in that it is situated along the Sepik River and the bulk of the population is spread out along the waterways, which are the only accessible means to the main centres and to obtain goods and services. In most areas, almost all villages are situated 15–25 kilometres apart. As a result, area presidents can often only visit their women's groups by paddling village to village in canoes, or by paying to travel in motor canoes or aeroplanes (see Table 2). Our transport costs are therefore very high and unavoidable, except when we are invited to join church groups travelling on church programmes. The programmes we provide usually have to be scheduled on a quarterly instead of a monthly basis, so that available resources can be put to the widest possible use.

The area association executives have worked so hard since ADCOW was formalised. All of them have made big sacrifices to serve their fellow women on a voluntary basis, since no office-holder, including myself, is paid. We do it for the sake of women and human development, even though at times it is an annoyance to our husbands because, as wives and mothers, we sometimes neglect them and the children, especially when we are away for one to two weeks working on the awareness programmes, or occasionally attending ESCOW training programmes.

Women in Ambunti District show that they are very talented when they have the opportunity to develop various skills in their own ways, such as in managing their families and gardens and growing cash crops. The teaching done in the programmes is mostly oral because the women can read very little. There is widespread illiteracy in the villages throughout the district and a desperate need for adult literacy training programmes, especially for women. Yet we lack almost all the resources necessary to undertake such programmes and I do not know where they will come from.

Like the area association presidents, I personally gained most of my leadership training and my experience as an organiser from the religious programmes organised by the denomination to which I belong - the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church. The church trains mothers for leadership, so that we learn to organise women and to develop awareness programmes. There are four different denominations in Ambunti District: the South Sea Evangelical Church, the Assemblies of God, the Catholic Church and the SDA Church. Most of the services for women come from the churches, which provide a dramatic source of education and knowledge that helps to build our characters and know-how.
Problem areas

Most of our problems stem from lack of funding, resources and training. We need a women's centre in the district where we can have our meetings, hold training workshops and seminars and display our handicrafts for tourists and other interested buyers. Financial resources are definitely required to activate the awareness and adult literacy training programmes more effectively. There is also a need for allowances to help compensate organisers for their work and the sacrifices that they voluntarily make. We need information and advice about where to source funding, as we do not know how or where to look.

Official government assistance to rural women's groups is very rare, as is assistance from non government organisations (NGOs). Government assistance is allocated through the Community Development Division but available funding is normally used up in the urban centres, while rural areas are left to operate by whatever means are available. Since the establishment of ADCOW, we have received almost no funding assistance from the government or NGOs, though sometimes we get handouts during election periods. The regular field visits and follow-up programmes necessitated by new changes and developments are hampered by lack of funds. In the future we expect more resources to be provided, since the district has been classified as a growth centre in view of the opening of the Frieda mine and other proposed major projects.

Adequate finance would help support area association and local women's group activities by providing: fieldworker allowances and field rations; first aid; teaching and literacy materials; hire of outboard motor and canoe, fuel costs and operator's allowance; and air or road travel to provincial headquarters for quarterly district executive meetings.

Conclusion

Although women are human in any given society, in Papua New Guinea they are generally less regarded and are underestimated, which gives them few chances of an important participatory role in the development process. As women in Papua New Guinea, especially in the rural remote areas, we see ourselves first, then the churches and then the nation. We get less as citizens and serve more as Christians and citizens, and get served as women the least.

Reference

Introduction

In this paper we discuss the role of a woman's organisation in developing a community response to the social changes associated with a large gold mining project in Lihir, a group of four islands in New Ireland Province in Papua New Guinea. Martha Macintyre has been working in Lihir since 1994 monitoring the social impact of mining, and Jacklynne Membup has been employed since 1993 in the Community Relations Department of Lihir Gold to coordinate a women's organisation that assists Lihir women to adapt to the changes resulting from the project. Like all such large projects, the Lihir mine is bringing about enormous social and economic changes, to which people have to adapt extremely quickly. From the outset the company encouraged women's organisations, partly because official policy in Papua New Guinea requires mining companies to build into their projects certain social amelioration programmes that will assist people and reduce negative impacts. The island-wide women's organisation formed in Lihir is called Petzstorme, a term meaning 'working together' in the local language.

Before the development of the mine, women in Lihir had lived in villages scattered around the coast of the main island and on the three small islands just off the coast. The society is organised into matrilineal clans, so that descent is calculated through women and land was managed through women prior to the mining development. As has unfortunately often been the case in Papua New Guinea, men assumed control in the negotiations with the company and women's rights over land were ignored. This occurred in Bougainville, and neither the PNG Government nor the mining companies learned the hard lessons taught by the exclusion of Bougainvillean women as custodians of the land.

Problems, agenda, achievements

Petzstorme has attempted to function on a wide range of issues. Its basic role initially was to serve as a way to bring women together for information sessions. Attempts to think about what might be the problems people would have to face, and how to be pro-active, consumed a lot of attention in the early period of the mining project. The company, recognising that problems would arise, tried to get women to talk about them and devise their own responses. Two problems that became particularly obvious in the first few months after construction began were the enormous increase in beer consumption and the violence and social disruption that accompanied drunkenness. Violence occurred not only against women but between men. Before the project, there had been relatively little beer available on the island. Domestic violence had been
mostly hidden from view, but the lack of inhibition when drunk meant that men began hitting their wives publicly, something that had rarely happened in the past. In a sense, a private and unacknowledged problem that had existed in Niolam before the development of mining was now brought into the open. For many women, it was extremely humiliating to be beaten up in public in their village and there was widespread concern.

It therefore became a priority to devise ways of responding to violence - to empower women to see it as a crime and to take issues of violence to the village court. Petztorme encouraged women to develop strategies appropriate to their own communities, both to protect themselves or to have some form of refuge. Some villages decided that going to the house of the catechist was the best measure; in others, there is a house where a woman and her husband were prepared to protect battered women. This is a very difficult issue in Melanesian villages, and often men will not allow their wives to take in even a relative.

Very early on, women decided that they wanted to be a part of the mining project as much as they could, to have access to some of the benefits it brought. Petztorme attempted to deal with these aspirations, but one of the main problems they had to face was the passive opposition of the company to employing women in any but very lowly jobs. Mining companies are male dominated in all cultures and very few women work for them. This is especially so in Papua New Guinea, where even fewer women work in mining than do in Australia. The mostly white men who run the mining company understood the desirable goal of employing local people to mean employment of local men. Equally, there was great resistance on the part of Lihirian men to having women in the paid workforce. Of course, the jobs that were made available to women were all very low-paid and menial: cleaning and doing laundry for the workers who lived on site in the men's quarters; and helping to prepare and serve food. Such jobs involved very little training - it is hard to advance your career washing sheets all day.

Men were therefore recruited in far greater numbers into the training programmes, while women who wanted to train often met resistance from their own families. So there was a kind of double-barrelled gun loaded against women in the matter of employment opportunities. There was particular hostility when women took, or attempted to take, ‘masculine’ jobs, such as driving big, or even small, trucks, or jobs that required them to wear trousers. Women wearing trousers became a symbol of male concern. Even if they were cleaning rooms and did not wear trousers, the idea that they might do so became the major excuse used by men to keep women back in the village.

Many difficulties thus arose from routine opposition to women's involvement in the workforce. Eventually, though, the employers began to notice that the few women who really resisted family pressures and took traditional mining jobs did not drink and so did not crash the vehicles; they were very careful workers and did not turn up late to work with hangovers. In the simple sense that women worked and conducted themselves differently from men, they gained some small advantage in the employment stakes. A few women trained as secretaries and clerks and they get better wages than many untrained men. This has, to some extent, made life easier for women, particularly as Petztorme encourages younger ones to apply for positions that are not the most menial and lowly paid, and places pressure from within the company organisation to provide training for women. At the community relations level of the company, the women's section has been particularly active in trying to encourage women to apply for jobs where they can receive training and earn better wages.

**Working in community relations**

In the Community Relations Department, we conducted a survey in which Petztorme members collected the information. It emerged that not only were women better workers than men when given the opportunity but also that women did different things with their earnings. The amount of money that men spent on beer varied between 50 and 90 per cent of their weekly earnings. This was during the early construction phase, when there was a kind of fury of beer drinking, which has since levelled off a little. I found it very interesting that women, on the other hand, gave about the same amount of money to the church and to Petztorme and other women's organisations that men tended to spend on beer. New church building projects and such like have flourished, mainly financed with the money that quite young women earned as laundrymaids, cleaners, and so on. At present, still very few women are employed, but those who are employed are often relatively highly paid in secretarial positions - they are clustered in the usual positions that an Australian company would be seen as women's work.

The promotion of women's roles in decision making and employment has been a major concern of Petztorme, but the organisation has also supported a number of money-making projects for women. Women observed that the men's drinking was swamping the island with cans, which quickly filled with water and turned can dumps at the back of villages into mosquito breeding grounds. So Petztorme set up a can-crushing project which generates money with which they hope to buy a truck to facilitate the work of the organisation. It takes a long time, though, to buy a truck out of crushed cans! Women's activities all fall into the 'self help' category and mining company support for men's business ventures has been far greater than for women's. Women also took over management of the market, built in the new township, as another source of income. Petztorme is currently trying to encourage women to supplement their income by growing produce for regular sale at the market.
The work done by the women's section of the Community Relations Department includes a very important educative component. It not only promotes education about social change and adjustment but education generally, and encourages girls to continue at school, with financial assistance from the mine. I think it is very important that women are seen to be the ones who throughout the community promote education and encourage people to apply to the company for assistance with scholarships at all levels: from elementary school right through to tertiary education. As the population expands and people recognise the need for qualifications when seeking employment, so more young girls are choosing to stay on at school.

In spite of Petzorme's many internal conflicts (largely due to the pre-existing splits in the community and the speed with which members of the organisation have had to adjust to working together on issues of common concern), it nonetheless does provide a unifying group to deal with the most serious modern problem – the emergence of dramatic social inequalities. Prior to the arrival of the mining company, there were no real inequalities between people in Lihir. Everyone had access to land and sea and most people lived pretty much like their neighbours. The influx of compensation payments and wage labour has altered that balance extraordinarily. It is largely through women's organisations that attempts are being made to ameliorate the conflicts arising from inequality.
Christianity and women in Bougainville

Ruth Saovana-Spriggs, Technical Team, Bougainville People's Congress

Background

During the past 200 years, Christianity has taken deep root in the lives of Pacific Islanders and it is now an inseparable part of people's existence. In Bougainville, Christianity has become a cultural way of life for the vast majority of people. The ten years of civil war/independence struggle between the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Security Forces/local militia and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) became a major turning-point to God for most Bougainvillians. During the conflict, an estimated 18–20,000 lives were lost, both in direct military confrontations and through the lack of medical supplies after the PNG government withdrew all services from the island in 1990. The government later reestablished a system of military occupation in areas not dominated by the BRA. People were herded into refugee camps ('care centres'), where human rights abuses, intimidation, harassment, rape and killings were frequent, and where movement was strictly controlled, eventually by a pass system.

In the political vacuum of 1990–94, when there was virtually no civil government, the often traumatised people committed themselves strongly to their various churches. The churches have long offered succour and services, but they now by necessity became involved in public affairs, resulting in a general change of attitude and expectation about the respective roles of church and government. The churches played a pivotal role in providing services from their few stored resources, which soon ran out. The major issue was health. Services delivered with love and Christian fellowship became the most important aspect of people's social life. Many women launched a campaign to 'bring home our children from the jungle' – that is, the young men who took up arms with the BRA to fight for Bougainville's independence. This action by women was the birth of reconciliation and opened up other areas such as mediation and negotiation between the BRA, the people and the PNG Government. It was the beginning of the peace process, culminating in a ceasefire signed in April 1998 by all the warring factions.

Here are two women's stories of their experiences during the most violent period of the war. Both are church members, one a Methodist (United Church) and the other a Catholic. Both are heavily involved in community work to restore a degree of normality to the people's lives. Both testify to the help God gave them during the war in their efforts as women to bring peace to their communities. (I refer to the two women by pseudonyms, since for security reasons they do not want to be identified.)

'Anna', a nursing sister-in-charge of a rural health centre

Anna had a Christian upbringing. Her father trained as a Methodist lay preacher and her mother was a nursing aide in the first Methodist hospital. They ran a Methodist boarding school in the 1960s and 1970s and Anna, like many children of her generation, received a modern education in mission schools. She trained at a Methodist nursing training college and then at a base hospital. She is a highly qualified nurse and midwife and does minor surgical operations. She is highly respected for her work and the love and care she brings to it. Most of her staff are local women trained at various nursing training colleges.

The health centre Anna runs was built in the 1960s by the New Zealand Methodist Mission. It has a maternity ward and an outpatients section, but no surgical ward or doctor – there has been no doctor since the New Zealand medical workers left the island after PNG independence in 1975. The centre caters for three major language communities and a population of 12–14,000.

From the beginning of the war, Anna made a conscious decision to attend to all wounded who came to the centre, not favouring one side over the other. She often performed minor operations to remove shotgun pellets or stitched up badly wounded soldiers, BRA men and civilians. For her neutral stance, Anna was misunderstood and she and her family were harassed and threatened. She was badly beaten up by members of the local BRA branch, resulting in a dislocated hip, a badly bruised face and lacerated hands. The BRA objected to her attending injured members of the PNG Security Forces and their local militia allies, whom they saw as the enemy, deserving to die. Anna's husband sparingly applied what modern medicine was left to the cuts on her body, and her family and church members prayed for her. Her recovery is testimony to God's sovereign power of healing and the power of faith and prayer.

The young BRA men eventually recognised the stupidity of their behaviour. A year or so later they persuaded their chiefs, parents and relatives to organise a big reconciliation ceremony with Anna and her family, involving several villages and
including both Christian and traditional forms of reconciliation. The BRA men sought forgiveness from Anna and her family and kin, who joined in prayers for reconciliation. A huge amount of traditional currency and other gifts was given to Anna and her family as compensation, followed by a feast and much handshaking.

Anna’s story

It was the most difficult time of my career as a health worker in a rural community. The health centre where I have worked for over 15 years had very little medicine. Every form of communication and transportation was cut off when the PNG Government imposed a complete blockade on Bougainville in 1990. I had heard that the International Red Cross had been supplying some medicine, mainly antimalarial drugs, to the nearest health centre, a Catholic clinic. For love of the people, I risked my life, generally walking alone to this clinic to collect whatever medicine they could spare. On rare occasions, two or three men dared to accompany me. My husband comes from Buka island and it was doubly risky for him to move about because the Buka leaders and chiefs had invited the PNG Security Forces to return. In the eyes of the BRA, this invitation was a betrayal of the BRA cause – independence for Bougainville.

I made a conscious decision to attend to everyone who needed medical attention: Papua New Guinean and Bougainvillean civilians, Papua New Guinean soldiers and local militia men, and BRA men. It was my duty to save lives, which meant making no distinctions between race or ethnic groups, religion, soldiers or civilians. My commitment and duty is first to God and to his people. Members of the BRA rejected my neutral stand and commitment. In their minds, I should only attend to them and other Bougainvillean, and not the Papua New Guinean soldiers. At times, when BRA members learned of the little supply of medicine in the centre, two or three would come and seize it at gunpoint.

The PNG Security Forces also meted out their share of harassment, intimidation and threats to me, my family and my nurses. The Security Forces inherited the only vehicle the health centre had at gunpoint and it was never returned. Soldiers came drunk and armed to the health centre, often in the middle of the night, and shouted at nurses to attend to them, or used the only maternity ward as a toilet.

What was most difficult was maintaining a balanced attitude towards these warring factions. When I was so badly beaten, I decided not to work again, but after a while I saw the need of the people. It was my love for them, and their love for me and my family that kept me going. Besides this, God was my support. Nowadays, my family and I are constantly flooded with gifts, even from people we do not know. It is a great blessing and we thank God for that.

'Maria’, a trained horticulturalist

Educated and trained through the Catholic mission, Maria taught at a Catholic agricultural centre in Bougainville before the civil war. When the war began, she and her husband moved to their village in the northeast. As church leaders they took up the task of mediating between members of the BRA and civilians, and negotiating with the BRA to lay down their arms and 'come home' to their families in their communities. They did this in a very quiet and unassuming fashion. Maria also formed a Catholic Women's Group in her community. Apart from social service activities, the group also engaged in negotiations with northern BRA members to abandon fighting and 'come home'.

Maria's story

The most important thing for me and my women was to establish and nurture trust and honesty in the BRA, so that trust and honesty would flow between us. One little move outside the rules of the game could mean the end of our efforts, a futile and devastating outcome for me, the women and my family.

We tracked through mountains and valleys, crossing rivers week after week, month after month. This was the most trying time for us. But we had to show the BRA that we were serious. If we gave up after a few tries, they would have lost trust in us. We had nothing material to offer them and modern medicine was a thing of the past. But like them, we looked to tradition. We learned local traditional medicine from our old people. We saw the jungle with a different eye. It became our source of medical and food supplies. Plants, leaves, roots, fruits, the bark of trees as well as marine life became useful as medicines. Often our efforts were misunderstood, raising suspicion on both sides – civilians and the BRA. We saw the need to explain our efforts to the people but time was always an important factor. So we often had to leave suspicions hanging and just pray that no major or minor conflict would arise. But, gradually, as my Catholic Women's Group and the northern BRA members felt more secure and confident, there was a little opening in the path of negotiation and mediation. Sometimes, a small matter would take over two months to resolve, but we did it wholeheartedly.

The BRA trusted us, the women, but not so much the men. There were complicated dynamics during this 'building trust' process. The young BRA men know we are important not only as landowners but also as procreators and peace makers. It finally dawned on them that the women are picking up the bits and pieces from what they, the men, have destroyed. The women saw the young men as their children, children of Bougainville whom they must protect and bring back home. These young men are the defenders of our land from external destructive forces. They do not deserve to be killed for defending their land and people, but they do need to learn to live a normal life.

Reflections

My particular concern is that women should participate in the future governing of Bougainville. Women's efforts to create an environment of reconciliation must not be lost to the men, who have a tendency for power play. It is the women who have been picking up the pieces left by men's actions. Women from all levels, but especially simple, ordinary village women, showed strength and bravery in venturing into the jungles and the
mountains in search of their children, the young BRA men, and bringing them home. The coming home occurred in waves, one by one, in twos or in groups, sometimes after weeks, months or years of women's persistent efforts. It was a great joy to the women when the young men came home.

Women in Bougainville are 'jacks of all trades'. Mothers and mothers-to-be are nurturers of life, leaders, health workers, teachers, fisherwomen, gardeners, cooks, fuel collectors, home carers, and accountants in the customary and modern economies. It is highly desirable that they extend these skills in order to take a proper share in governing the island. The war has given them fresh, vital strength and command of these customary roles and their roles as landowners in Bougainville's matrilineal societies. The authority that women exercise over land is hugely misunderstood by well-meaning outsiders who have come in droves to assist in restoring the society, the infrastructure and the people's sense of security.

The ten-year conflict has caused people to reflect on their relationship to and complete dependence on the land and the environment at a time when modern infrastructure, goods and services failed to sustain them. Lost customary practices were revived and became both useful and necessary, such as building bush material houses and carving traditional canoes and paddles for fishing and transportation, when modern forms of travel had been destroyed. Traditional knowledge of healing and the use of traditional medicine became very important and effective. However, these strategies for coping with the crisis did not just mean a return to tradition, to the past. New forms of relationships were revived, strengthened and extended. For example, a person from the south stranded in the north needed only to announce his or her clan, and he or she would immediately be taken in as a clan and family member by the same clan in the north. Such new relationships, extending kinship and friendship, were emerging before the crisis, with marriages between men and women from different parts of the island. However, they gained strength and new meaning during the years of conflict. The younger generations growing up in urban areas, with Tok Pisin and English as the only languages of communication, are now learning and using their local languages, to their parents' great pleasure. It is a time when the land, the jungle, the sea, the marine life, the customs, all have revitalised meanings for the people, who before the crisis were very much drawn to Western ideas and influence. One can say that the years of fighting have given the people a more deeply meaningful relationship to their environment and indigenous identity.

Conclusion

Women are as interested in control over their land and resources as are men in contemporary Bougainville. The women's initiative in planting/birthing the peace process should mark a new era in the process of government. Their efforts in this arena have raised a new and strong awareness of the need to involve them in matters concerning the exploitation of natural resources by external companies. This is really about women regaining and exercising their traditional authority, not only in the communities and over land, but also in governing modern Bougainville. They are looking for ways to combine traditional and modern authority in order to find their place in a world organised and managed by men. In other words, women desire to achieve a balance in the political economy of a new Bougainville.

Christianity is fundamental in people's lives. Their faith in God gave them the strength to carry out daring tasks, and their Christian love and commitment for each other gave them strength to rebuild and make sense of their individual lives. It is faith in God through Christian activities and networks that brought change and hope to broken lives. No one who lived through the conflict in Bougainville will not have testimony to share on how God saw them through the difficult times, or on the miracles which occurred, of healing, welfare and bonding with friends and enemies. The experiences of 'Anna' and 'Maria' tell in microcosm the story of the Bougainville people.
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ICPD goals and thresholds:
How well have the Pacific Island countries performed?

William J. House, United Nations Population Fund
Country Support Team, Suva

Introduction

The Program of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994 is widely acclaimed as a landmark multi-country agreement, signifying the dawn of a new era in how the world community views the interface between population and development (UN 1994, 1999). The overriding objective of the Cairo PoA is to raise quality of life and individual well-being, and to promote human development by recognising the complexity of interrelationships between population and development policies and programmes. The PoA recognises that the goal of empowering women to give them greater autonomy and to improve their political, social, economic and health status is inherently important and is a prerequisite for national sustainable development. The right to education, especially of females, must be promoted to meet basic human needs. In particular, the PoA calls for the elimination of all practices that discriminate against women, and affirms that advancing gender equality and equity and the empowerment of women and limiting all forms of violence against them are the cornerstones of all population and development related programmes.

The ability of women to control their own fertility is an important and strategic human right and is highlighted throughout the PoA. It affirms that reproductive rights embrace certain human rights which rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, as well as a right to the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health.

This paper assesses the progress made by the Pacific Island countries in meeting some of the principal quantitative and qualitative goals of the ICPD PoA, despite the numerous constraints they face. It offers some suggestions as to how progress could be accelerated to overcome the identified constraints on policy and programme implementation addressed to meet the ambitious agenda of the ICPD PoA.

Compared with many other parts of the developing world, some of the Pacific Islands are well developed, generously endowed with resources and enjoy a relatively high standard of living. The countries are generally politically stable and relatively peaceful and have social structures which are still able to cater for the basic needs of their populations. During recent years, improvements in life expectancy, health and education indicate that much progress has been made throughout the region.

Quantitative goals of the ICPD PoA

The ICPD PoA lays out three specific long-term goals, as reflected in seven indicators. Most of the Pacific Island countries have already met the quantitative goals of the PoA on almost all of the above-mentioned dimensions (Table 1).

Papua New Guinea, by far the largest country in the region with a population in excess of four million, fails to meet all but one of the threshold levels. Solomon Islands fails to meet four of the seven thresholds and Kiribati, three of them. Six countries fail to meet the threshold for the maternal mortality ratio (MMR), the second most
Table 1  Performance of Pacific Island countries in meeting ICPD goals

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<td>100</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>79</td>
<td>*73</td>
<td>*370</td>
<td>*55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>*8</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>*550</td>
<td>*36</td>
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<td>*25</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>*561</td>
<td>83</td>
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<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>*28</td>
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<td>*67</td>
<td>*225</td>
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<td>95</td>
<td>*63</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>*170</td>
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<td>*160</td>
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<td>99</td>
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<td>Tuvalu</td>
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<td>*40</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>*51</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>95</td>
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Notes:
(1) Deliveries attended by trained personnel (%).
(2) Contraceptive prevalence rate (%).
(3) Population with access to basic health services (%).
(4) Infant mortality rate: number of deaths in first year of life per 1,000 live births.
(5) Maternal mortality ratio: number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.
(6) Female primary school enrolment, 5–14 years (%).
(7) Adult female literacy rate (%).
* Failure to meet relevant threshold level.

Sources: UNDP 1999b; WHO 1997 and 1998 for columns (1)–(3) and (5); SPC 1998 for column (4); and UNDP 1999a for all data on Papua New Guinea.

underachieved indicator, While the size of the MMR is cause for concern in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Kiribati, and probably reflects relatively poor maternal health conditions, it must be stressed that this statistic is particularly unreliable in such small populations. Six or fewer maternal deaths in any year would raise all but three of the 15 countries beyond the threshold.

While only four countries fail to meet the threshold for the infant mortality rate (IMR), significant progress has been made over the years in most countries in reducing this indicator. While life expectancy has improved, it has not increased by as much as might have been expected. Offsetting the fall in the IMR has been an upsurge in the prevalence of some non-communicable lifestyle diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension and accidents, particularly in middle-aged men. Such diseases and accidents are often fuelled by unhealthy eating (a diet high in fats and sugar), alcohol and drug abuse, sedentary lifestyles and dangerous driving. The situation has also deteriorated in the face of rising populations, stagnating or declining public sector health budgets, and the consequent retardation in the quality of health services.

All 15 countries fail to meet the threshold for the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR), a result which seems paradoxical. Indeed, fertility is widely recognised to have declined sharply across the region over the past two decades, although, admittedly, the total fertility rate (TFR) remains at 4.5 children or more in eight out of the 15 countries. Yet, the actual CPRs in most countries must surely be higher than the reported rates in order to support the reported TFRs.

Using the estimated linear cross-country regression relationship between the TFR and CPR of Westoff (1990) and Ross and Frankenberg (1993), I found that four countries (Fiji, Palau, Niue and Tuvalu) now surpass the threshold level for the CPR (House 1999b). Furthermore, all of these except Tuvalu climb above all seven thresholds in Table 1. Another five countries (Kiribati, Nauru, Cook Islands, Tonga and Samoa) now come within a 15 percentage point deficit, equivalent to about one child in the TFR, of the threshold for the CPR.

While the success of the family planning programmes in the region may be slightly better than the reported CPRs would lead us to believe, complacency is certainly not warranted. Fertility remains significant, while contraceptive usage still
remains very low, especially in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, FSM, Marshall Islands and Tokelau. Yet the goal of attaining universal access to quality reproductive health/family planning and sexual health (RH/FP-SH) services in the region still remains unrealised and presents a formidable challenge for the future. While I am in no position to gauge the pace of progress in the most recent years, it could be that the rate has decelerated and tapered off as more conservative and traditional socioeconomic and demographic groups are confronted with the need to change their behaviour.

Indications are that the age-specific fertility rates of adolescents have declined appreciably in the last 20 years, suggesting some success in expanding the reach of the family planning programmes (House and Ibrahim 1999). Again, however, great challenges remain for policy makers and programme managers. Early sexual activity among adolescents is believed to be growing, as reflected in rising rates of sexually transmitted infections and in growing public concern about teenage pregnancy outside of marriage. Yet, in general, adolescents do not visit public health clinics or service providers for family planning counselling and supplies because of the lack of confidentiality and the unfriendly nature of these services. Thus, major efforts are needed to improve RH/FP-SH services for adolescents throughout the Pacific region.

There are few surveys from the island countries which attempt to gauge the size of the unmet need of women for family planning, and then only the unmet need for limiting births. Clearly, this is a major lacuna which governments and donors in the region need to fill. From a 1995 knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) survey in Vanuatu, House (1999a) estimated that at least 24 per cent of all adult women of childbearing age have an unmet need for contraception for limiting the size of their families. It is revealing to note that, among Vanuatu women 35-49 years, the unmet need is 47 per cent. In Papua New Guinea, 29 per cent of currently married women have an unmet need for limiting additional births (National Statistical Office 1997).

Recently, House and Ibrahim (1999) have demonstrated that the reproductive health, and especially family planning, needs of many older women in the region may have been inadvertently overlooked. The authors demonstrate that fertility for the over-35s in the Pacific Island countries continues to be relatively high, compared with elsewhere in the world. Such high-risk behaviour by older women can be the cause of profound life-endangering reproductive health problems for them and their children. Yet the persistently higher fertility of these older women does not appear to attract anywhere near enough attention from planners, policy makers, donors and the media. If the threshold level of the ICPD PoA for the CPR of 55 per cent is to be surpassed by all countries in the region in the near future, more attention must be given to the prevailing high levels of fertility of older women in the Pacific Island countries.

Qualitative goals of the ICPD PoA

Reproductive health/family planning—sexual health

In terms of reproductive ill health, many of the Pacific Island countries have recognised the advantages of RH/FP-SH approaches in the context of primary health care, which may have contributed to improvements in various aspects of reproductive health status. Much training of health care providers has taken place and the quality of equipment and supplies has improved. Yet the extent of an integrated approach to RH/FP-SH varies significantly across the countries. Certain problems remain for women who continue to suffer from high morbidity, much of which goes undocumented. Some recently reported data for Fiji are revealing. Cervical and breast cancer account for 56 per cent of all female cancers, perhaps because little routine screening takes place. The incidence for women over 35 is four times that found in Thailand and five times that in the Philippines, demonstrating key unresolved reproductive health problems in the most developed island country (UNDP 1999b). Furthermore, the incidences of reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases are believed to be on the increase in the region, while unwanted teenage pregnancies, which often end in abortion, are indicative of how far we have to go to attain universal access to reproductive health services.

Gender equality and the advancement of women

The Beijing Platform for Action, the ICPD PoA, as well as the UN General Assembly review of the ICPD+5 process, called upon governments to sign, ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and to introduce measures aimed at achieving gender equality and equity in a systematic and comprehensive manner.

A recently conducted review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) has concluded that the past decade has seen significant progress in the move to greater gender equity in the Pacific Island countries (YWCA 1999). Greater recognition has emerged of the need for gender equity and greater consistency in the integration of gender issues in key policy and planning documents. The review concluded that many governments seem to have made changes to national legislation or policies in order to improve the status of women and the pace of change has accelerated since 1995. New legislation or national policies have entailed changes in family law and implementation of procedures to punish gender violence, as well as policies to raise girls' and women's access to education and training. Efforts to sensitise decision makers about gender issues and the production of gender-disaggregated data have had some impact in most countries. The review concluded that, while the climate for gender equity has improved, efforts to build greater awareness must be intensified until changes filter through to all social institutions.
In education, gender gaps at primary and secondary school have now been reduced. In some countries, including Tonga and Fiji, the number of girls at school now marginally exceeds that of boys as well as their mean years spent at school. For tertiary or vocational education, however, males still have more opportunities than females. Gender bias in curricula and courses, as well as placement policies, limit the choices and opportunities available to girls and women. Overall, too few resources are given to vocational and non-formal education, despite their obvious relevance for both men and women.

Apart from such commendable progress, much remains to be done. There is a particular need to enhance the economic empowerment of women. Their lower proportion in paid employment is one of several possible indicators of their economic disadvantage. The gender gap is everywhere large in terms of differences in income and in women’s access to productive resources, credit, training and business or livelihood opportunities. Given the economic and social trends prevalent in the region, this inequity contributes to the feminisation of poverty and detracts from the advancement of women in other respects.

While hard data are scarce, House (2000) has demonstrated that women made little headway in diversifying into male occupational preserves in Fiji over the 1986–96 decade, despite a significant rise in their rate of labour force participation. The gender concentration of the distribution of occupations remains extreme, impacting significantly on male–female earnings differences. Rather than suggesting that women are receiving lower rewards for performing the same jobs as men, it is much more likely that specific gender-based occupational assignments explain much of the overall pay differential. Indeed, using multivariate regression analysis, only 40 per cent of the overall mean male–female difference in earnings can be attributed to a compositional effect (advantages in education, experience, sector of employment, training and occupation), while a large part of the remainder may be due to various aspects of ‘discrimination’ against women, particularly in the assignment of high status and better paying occupations. More of this kind of analysis of the operations of labour markets in the region is required in order to assess the employment status of women and to identify interventions which can address their disadvantages and the elements of discrimination which they experience.

The comprehensive review of the implementation of the Beijing PFA, while recognising achievements, concluded that many impediments to progress remain, including insufficient political will on the part of governments and insufficient sharing of information within governments. Discussion about the Beijing and Pacific platforms has been limited to women’s ministries/departments and among women’s NGOs.

The very limited availability of gender-sensitive statistics and indicators, which has hampered progress in implementing the PFA, is a major constraint on more gender-sensitive planning, programme implementation and monitoring throughout the region. The scarcity of information, especially in regard to women’s work and economic contributions, is ubiquitous. Urgent measures are needed to redress this situation, including more financial, technical and human resources.

**Conclusion**

If the prevailing ICPD PoA goal attainment in the Pacific Island countries are to survive in the new millennium, innovative policies are required across a broad spectrum of issues. The newer concepts of reproductive health, adolescent reproductive health and gender equity and equality need to be disseminated across all social groups and influential leaders. New service facilities, staffed with well-trained providers, will need to be constructed and strategically located to meet the needs of a burgeoning number of potential clients. Therein lies the greatest challenge. How can Pacific Island countries improve the quality of standards already achieved and expand the quantity of services to provide for a growing population at a time when their economies are experiencing increasing strains, and public sector budgets and staff are being curtailed as part of adjustment and reform programmes triggered by the Asian economic crisis?

The ICPD+5 assembly called for increased investments designed to improve the quality and availability of sexual and reproductive health services. Unfortunately, translation of the commitment made to achieving the ICPD goals into commensurate levels of donor funding has not been forthcoming at the global level. The UNFPA office based in Fiji serves 14 countries and has felt the pressure on the amount of financial support it is able to offer in the region. The size of its assistance has fallen from US$14.8 million in the period 1992–97 to US$7.2 million for 1998–2001. Contributions to the core resources of UNFPA from the government of New Zealand have declined from a peak of US$821,000 in 1997 to US$683,000 in 1999. Australia’s contributions rose dramatically from A$1.7 million (US$1.3 million) in 1992 to peak at A$5 million (US$2.2 million) in 1996, only to decline to A$2.1 million (US$1.4 million) in 1999.

There is no assurance of continued growth in national currency contributions of the two major bilateral organisations in the region: AusAID and NZODA. Therefore, efforts to increase contributions to the multilateral population programme, including initiatives in reproductive health, need to be stepped up. This should entail approaches to other non-traditional donors, including private foundations.

**Notes**

1. Indeed, more generally reflecting the poor state of demographic data in the region, 'few social, health or economic statistics for the region can be used with real confidence. Good information is an indispensable part of good governance' (UNDP 1999b:32).
2. Tuvalu still falls marginally below the threshold for the infant mortality rate.
3. Women’s share of places in rural training centres in 1995 amounted to only 700 out of 1,900 in Solomon Islands and 90 out of 300 in Vanuatu (UNDP 1999b).
Acknowledgement

The views and opinions in this paper are the author's and do not necessarily represent the position of the United Nations Population Fund.

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The Gender Empowerment Measure: Issues from West Java, Indonesia

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**Introduction**

The Human development report 1999 (UNDP 1999) ranks Indonesia as a country of poor gender equality, which is not surprising for a developing nation. The 1999 gender-related development index (GDI) and the gender empowerment measure (GEM) rank Indonesia 88 and 71, respectively, out of a possible 102 countries. The GDI uses a composite set of indices related to human development which are then adjusted to measure gender inequality, while the GEM measures gender inequality in economic and political opportunities. In both measures, Indonesian women rank poorly. This paper focuses on the effectiveness of the criteria upon which the GEM is based. It argues that local factors and the views of women involved in the development process need to be absorbed into the indicators which measure the GEM. The paper is based on research and fieldwork among factory women in rural Indonesia, carried out between 1997 and 1999. Three hundred and twenty-three factory women and their mothers were surveyed to ascertain how they and their communities measure the extent to which young women are empowered by economic development. The results show clearly that, at the local level, women measure gender empowerment in completely different ways.

The GEM ranks nations according to the extent to which gender equality has improved over time, through indicators based on country data. Complex formulas are used to measure economic and political power and the participation of women compared with men. The following indicators are used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to create a composite GEM:

- seats held by women in parliament
- female administrators and managers
- female professional and technical workers
- women’s real GDP per capita.

On the basis of these indicators, Indonesian women are given the relatively low rank of 71 in the 1999 GEM. However, the indicators are very general and do not completely represent the ways in which women may be empowered over time. For example, the fact that women are highly represented in parliament does not result in all women in that nation automatically becoming empowered. Simply having more women in parliament over time does not mean that gender equality has improved. This assumes that the women in government are there to support the status of other women. For example, China ranks 40 on the 1999 GEM mainly because women make up 21 per cent of its legislature. Indonesia ranks 71 predominantly because women constitute only 11 per cent of the legislature. Are Chinese women more empowered than Indonesian women as a result? The assumption that an increase in the number of women in parliament means that gender empowerment has occurred, and that parliaments in developing nations have power, is misplaced.

The first three indicators of the GEM are problematic because most of the women who would be drawn into these measurements are from different (usually elite) classes and ethnic groups from the majority of women in the nations concerned. They are not representative at all of working class, rural or the most impoverished groups. They are not representative of women where gender inequality is most prevalent and most obvious, for example in the rural sectors of the economy and sectors where women are invisible to data collected for the GEM, such as factory workers. The final indicator of the GEM (women’s real GDP per capita) has been analysed by McGillivray and Pillarisetti (1998:200). They state that the measurement of income does not address the realities of empiricism, and that the income variable is included in the GEM calculations in an unadjusted form, unlike all other UNDP calculations. This indicator ignores empirical reality and does not take into account the small nature of the manufacturing sector in developing nations. Further, the income data used by the UNDP to calculate the GEM are based on vital statistics which are prone to inaccuracy (Bulmer 1993, Bulmer and Warwick 1993, Gulrajani 1994, Jones 1987).

McGillivray and Pillarisetti also point out that the GEM in 'adopting an essentially arbitrary value for all countries effectively prescribes a universal norm'. This defies the reality of the divide between the developed and the developing world and the social, cultural and economic individuality of each nation. For example, the GEM formula gives equal weighting to all countries, without regard to the accepted argument that gender inequality is more widespread in developing nations. Further, the formula ignores differences within nations, between ethnic groups, between rural and urban women, and between classes. In all developing countries these differences are usually quite significant. McGillivray and Pillarisetti also point out that the indicator which uses numbers of women in parliament ignores more basic and important indicators, such as the right to vote which is denied many women in developing nations.

As a result of extensive research among rural Indonesian factory women, and on the basis of the ideas and culturally sensitive attitudes of the women themselves, I suggest that other more important indicators could be used to measure and define gender empowerment. They should at least be considered by anyone attempting to use the GEM to study the extent to which
economic or political development and power lead to gender empowerment. These suggested indicators are:

- inclusion in household decision making processes;
- ability to solve problems (because of new employment);
- mother–daughter comparisons (education levels, marriage age);
- financial contributions to family;
- geography (highland or lowland dwellers), and
- the impact of the state and labour laws.

**What is empowerment?**

Empowerment is a problematic term. To empower someone means to give them power or to do something to them to ensure that they receive power. However, to receive power means that you are taking it from someone else or that you will use it over someone else. Either way, the ultimate result is that someone’s life it negatively affected as a result. The GEM and the UNDP need to ask: ‘What is empowerment?’

Afshar (1998:3) claims that empowerment will mean different things at different times in history. It will be different as a result of culture and local geography. She argues that empowerment needs to be defined so that it is not perceived as something which is ‘done to women or done for women’. It should come from the women themselves and be something they receive power. However, to receive power means that the household were very important. Female factory wages were extremely beneficial to the social, physical and spiritual well-being of the families I studied. Usually, the small factory incomes were budgeted to allow for the factory workers’ transport and food costs, which were comparatively high, and occasionally for a few luxury items. The remainder was spent on food, clothing, education or medicine.

The sampled factory women contributed on average 38 per cent of their incomes to their family every month, their average monthly incomes being 142,000 rupiah (Rp) in 1997–98. Only the equivalent of 17 per cent of this monthly income was reimbursed to the women for their working costs (transport and food). Working costs greater than this were usually met by the women themselves from the remainder of their wages.

The research also found that the factory women make substantial financial and unseen contributions to development, such as giving monies to family members on a daily basis, over and above the monthly contributions. Other unseen contributions include improving the status of women, providing a positive example to other women, contradicting the traditional ethos that women are a financial burden to their family or husbands, and in challenging notions of female workers propagated by the state and investors. Unseen contributions, combined with the significant financial ones made by the women in Indonesia who rarely give away power unless they are forced to, or because they see some benefit to themselves.

**Contributions to development**

In spite of the oppression and exploitation highlighted above, the factory women manage to contribute to the development of their family and community with their meagre wages and through their attitude to work. In so doing, the women empower themselves and are not empowered through the actions of politicians or of professionals and managers above them, as the GEM saliently implies. The financial contributions made by the women were a major primary source of improved status, which empowered them to solve household problems and to constructively contribute to household discussions. This argument has been strongly reinforced by similar findings from other research among women at the grassroots level in Mexico and Bangladesh (see Osmani 1998, Rowlands 1998).

Before going to West Java I had assumed that the financial contributions of female factory workers to their families would be relatively insignificant. This expectation was based on the literature and on the fact of the extremely low wages in Indonesia per se (Wolf 1992, for example). However, after having surveyed only a few women, I realised that their contributions to the household were very important. Female factory wages were extremely beneficial to the social, physical and spiritual well-being of the families I studied. Usually, the small factory incomes were budgeted to allow for the factory workers’ transport and food costs, which were comparatively high, and occasionally for a few luxury items. The remainder was spent on food, clothing, education or medicine.

The research also found that the factory women make substantial financial and unseen contributions to development, such as giving monies to family members on a daily basis, over and above the monthly contributions. Other unseen contributions include improving the status of women, providing a positive example to other women, and challenging the traditional ethos that women are a financial burden to their family or husbands, and in challenging notions of female workers propagated by the state and investors. Unseen contributions, combined with the significant financial ones made by the women in Indonesia, create a sophisticated and substantial system of social security. This security is provided in spite of an oppressive and exploitative state and the rarefying nature of global capitalism. The women I studied provided evidence which strongly suggests that the GEM indicators are not totally relevant to the lives of many women in the Third World. The factory women were doing more to empower themselves, using their small wages, their experience and their new life choices and were not beholden to women in higher levels of management or public service.

**Some self-perceptions of empowerment**

Despite the importance of their financial contributions to their families, most of the women surveyed did not feel empowered by money alone. When they conceptualised the paths to their own empowerment, the women considered other factors, such
as generational and demographic differences from their mothers and being included in decision making mechanisms, to have been more important.

In gross terms, 40 per cent of the women studied said that they felt their status had increased as a result of factory work (status being defined by the women as increased household ability to make decisions, solve problems and contribute financially). The other 60 per cent believed that their household status had not changed. Of those who claimed increased status, roughly 45 per cent stated that this was predominantly due to their new wage contributions to their family. The remaining 55 per cent thought that it was due to their not being at home all the time and, therefore, not being confined to household duties and under constant control.

At this point, it is easy to see why the young Sundanese factory women are significantly more able than their mothers to improve their status. I collected data on their mothers’ employment patterns. The small minority of mothers who did work were mostly confined to two sectors: agriculture, or household servitude. At the time, the average monthly income for house servants in Banjaran was Rp40,000, and agricultural wages for women averaged Rp50,000 per month. The average monthly income of the factory women was Rp142,000 which, in itself, is a small amount for hard work. However, compared with their mothers’ vastly inferior average incomes, it gives the factory women significantly more potential to improve status through financial means.

Apart from wages and dislocation, women commonly measured their improved status by the degree to which they were included in family decision making processes, and by their ability to make independent social and economic decisions and to solve family problems. That is, by being away from home and village and experiencing new and complex happenings in the factories, including Western notions of production, foreign managers, buyers and investors, they gained valuable and high status experience which enabled them to solve household problems. These are crucial indicators which need to be incorporated into the GEM and considered by anyone interested in gender empowerment.

Education and marriage

The women also measured improved status or empowerment by making comparisons between their own education, marriage and fertility levels and those of their mothers. It was evident that the young factory women had significantly more education, higher marriage ages and fewer children and were more able to choose their own spouse.

The average age at first marriage (AAFM) was used by the women to indicate the extent to which they had become empowered as a result of factory work, improved education and modern demographic norms. The AAFM of the married factory women was 17.2 years. Their overall average age at the time of the survey was 25.5 years, compared with an average age of 19.4 years for the cohort of unmarried factory women sampled. The combined average age of married and unmarried factory women sampled was 22 years.

The comparatively low AAFM of the mothers of the factory women provides a brief insight into the recent history of Sundanese women. The AAFM of the mothers was 14.3 years. However, when these figures are broken down into a highland–lowland distinction, significant patterns emerge. For example, the AAFM of the mothers in lowland areas was 15.6 years, compared with 13.3 years in highland areas. This distinction between married and unmarried factory women, combined with the highland–lowland distinction, provides an interesting insight into the differences operating between the more traditional highland areas and the lowland areas in the research site.

Conclusion

The GEM attempts to measure or trace the indicators of gender equity in political and economic power. However, research among factory women in rural Indonesia suggests that the GEM should be changed to incorporate additional indicators. Until that time, students and researchers need to take account of the reality of the lives of women at the local level in developing nations if they intend to use the GEM in their work.

References


The impact of gender and ethnicity on access to, and control over, resources: Implications for rural development in Nepal

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Introduction

Gender is now recognised in the development literature as a major factor influencing access to, and control over, resources in rural households (Gurung 1995, Jazairy, Alamgir and Panuccio 1992, Kwinjeh and Mgugu 1996, Safilios-Rothschild 1991). The term ‘resources’ is used broadly to include financial (income, savings, credit), technical/educational (training, study tours, agricultural extension) and physical resources (land, tools). An awareness of access and control issues is important for policy makers and rural development planners, who need to understand the factors which may impede women’s participation in training and development initiatives.

An area which has not been given the same attention as gender, but which exerts at least as strong an influence in some areas, is ethnicity. Even within a single community, factors such as who controls household income and who is able to attend training sessions will often vary on an ethnic basis. If policy makers and planners are to develop appropriate initiatives to facilitate rural development, they must be aware of both gender and ethnic divisions.

Nepalese context

A number of studies have documented general gender inequalities in Nepal. For example, more than 77 per cent of women in rural Nepal are illiterate, compared with about 50 per cent of men (Central Bureau of Statistics 1997). Rural women are not independent in terms of their use of resources; they have very little control over crop land, livestock or daily wages (Shtrii Shakti 1995). They are also less free to choose how to use their time. This has meant limited opportunities for personal development, especially involvement in activities for creativity, recreation, training or higher education. It also reinforces their mental state of dependence on males and their lower status (Shtrii Shakti 1995, Subedi 1997).

Nepal’s population is multi-ethnic, with a range of cultural and religious backgrounds. The research described below examined three distinct ethnic groups (Brahmin/Chhetri, Gurung and Tharu). These groups were chosen on the basis of their similar occupation (agriculture) in the area studied, but different settlement history.

The Brahmin people are of Aryan stock. They are not the aborigines of Nepal, but migrated from India in ancient times. They are scattered all over the country and all speak the Nepali language. Chhetris are the descendants of Brahmins whose wives belonged to other castes and they have similar festivals, rituals and cultural norms to the Brahmins. Thus, for the purpose of this study, they have been considered as one ethnic group (Singh and Shrestha 1992).

The Gurung are thought to have migrated from the mountains or foothills of the Himalayas to different parts of the country (Majupurias 1985). They are found mostly in the western and Himalayan regions of Nepal. They have their own dialects, which differ from one settlement to another, and they mostly engage in agriculture.

The Tharu are considered to be the native or aboriginal people of Nepal. They live predominantly in the Terai extending from east to west and some parts of the inner Terai. Their language is a mixture of Bhojpuri, Maghadi and Prakrit. Their housing style is quite different, as they live in mud huts rather than in brick/cement/wooden houses like the Brahmin/Chhetri and Gurung households (Singh and Shrestha 1992). They generally believe in ghosts and spirits and have full faith in Gursun (a tribal priest who is supposed to ward off evil spirits and cure diseases).

To date, little attention has been paid to the implications of these ethnic differences for the position and condition of women in Nepalese society. Rural planning and policy formulations in Nepal are usually done on an ad hoc basis, rather than on the basis of specific supporting information. A large gap exists between the formal acknowledgement by government of gender and ethnic issues, and policy implementation. There are, for example, laws sanctioning equal wage rates/remuneration and rights for both sexes, but in practice these laws are not enforced. Similarly, development models tend to be male biased (Bajracharya 1994). At the policy making level, there is no prioritisation of the needs of women or ethnic minorities and the problems they may face. Implementation of developmental work under such conditions is poor, with most planners failing to consider gender or ethnic-specific situations: this can contribute to project failure. It also makes it unlikely that development will work to overcome the disadvantages faced by some ethnic minorities and women.

Methodology

The research discussed here, which has contributed to a Master’s thesis, was in part carried out to provide planners and policy makers in Nepal with an improved understanding of the current
patterns of men's and women's access to, and control over, resources in different ethnic rural communities. The fieldwork was conducted by Devkota between April and June 1998 in the central Nepalese region of Chitwan (Devkota 1999). Three village development committees were selected to represent the three chosen ethnic groups. Four different data collection methods were used: participatory rural appraisal (social maps and seasonal calendars), gender analysis (activity profiles, access and control profiles and time use charts), key informant interviews, and a face-to-face household survey. The survey was administered separately to a male and a female from 123 households representing the three selected groups. Only data from the household survey are discussed in this article.

Access to services

Table 1 summarises the survey results in relation to access to three types of services: agricultural extension, community activities and training, and finance. It shows that males in all three ethnic groups overwhelmingly predominated in gaining access to agricultural and veterinary services. In all groups, a small percentage of respondents said that both men and women could access these services, and in one in six cases in both Brahmin/Chhetri and Gurung communities it was just the women. Of note, however, is that no Tharu women could access these services. That males had much better access may be a result of the virtual non-existence of female extension workers and the reluctance of women to approach male extension workers for technical advice and services. This reflects the male dominance in Nepalese society in general, whereby men enjoy privileged access to activities outside of the home and have more free time (Bajracharya 1994, Gurung 1995, Safilios-Rothschild 1991). It is also likely that male extension workers are reluctant to approach women, either because of perceptions that women have limited decision making power in the household or because of a fear of arousing the suspicion of male relatives.

In relation to access to community activities, there were some interesting differences. The activities examined included the opportunity to participate in community meetings, in training and in study tours. Among the Brahmin/Chhetri participants there were more men than women involved in skill development training, but this pattern was reversed among the Gurung, where over 70 per cent of training was for women alone. Meanwhile the Tharu reported that in most cases both women and men participated in such opportunities. In relation to community meetings, an important indicator of decision making power at the local level, men predominated in the Brahmin/Chhetri and Tharu groups, with no Tharu women being able to attend a meeting alone. In contrast, participation in such meetings was approximately equal among the Gurungs, a factor influenced by the absence of many Gurung men from home because of the heavy involvement of this ethnic group in military service. In relation to study tours, however, involving travel away from home, males predominated in all groups. Traditionally, women are not supposed to leave the village boundaries, and some are even restricted to their own household and agricultural land (Acharya 1993, Bajracharya 1994).

Access to finance was also dominated by men. Women's access was particularly poor among the Tharu and was limited in Brahmin/Chhetri communities. Gurung women, on the other hand, did not have good access to formal financial institutions such as banks but had good access to money lenders and greater access to savings than did men. Once again, the absence of males seems to have given Gurung women the opportunity to take overall control of household finances.

Table 1  Access to resources by gender and ethnicity, 1998 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of income</th>
<th>Brahmin/Chhetri</th>
<th>Ethnicity and gender</th>
<th>Gurung</th>
<th>Tharu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture extension worker</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary worker</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary hospital</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community meeting</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill development training</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming study tour</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking facility</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private money lender</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: M = males only, F = females only, B = both males and females.
The survey also sought information about control over income from crops, livestock and off-farm work (Table 2). Ethnic variation in the control of crop income was pronounced. For example, two-thirds of Brahmin/Chhetri participants reported that males had control, while two-thirds of Tharus claimed joint control. It was very rare for Tharu women to control crop income on their own, however. On the other hand, in three-quarters of Gurung households, females had control of this income. This high degree of control by Gurung females is once again most likely to be related to the absence of males for large parts of the year, while less control by women only in the Brahmin/Chhetri and Tharu households reflects the social norm that men usually deal with the finances.

Control over livestock income, mainly from the sale of large and small ruminants, varied significantly between ethnic groups as well. Gurung women controlled such income while, in the Brahmin/Chhetri households, control rested with men. The Tharu households indicated joint control over the income earned from the sale of large animals, while women had more control over income from small animals.

Off-farm income typically comes from household members working for government or non-governmental services, running small businesses or doing casual farm work. Together with pensions and remittances from family members working in cities, off-farm income provides a valuable source of cash to many rural Nepali households. The Brahmin/Chhetri males dominated the control of this income, which they were more likely to earn themselves because of their greater freedom to travel, but both men and women controlled money from pensions and remittances. About two-thirds of the Tharu respondents reported joint control of off-farm income. None from this group received income from pensions or remittances. Gurung females, on the other hand, had greater control than males over income from both off-farm employment and pensions/remittances.

Conclusion

While much agricultural and other rural development work in Nepal is carried out by women (see Devkota 1999), there are clearly barriers to their access to certain services, such as those provided by extension officers, and they typically have limited control over certain household resources, such as income. This lack of access and control is likely to result in a gender imbalance in decision making forums and in the poor participation of women in development programme activities. It also means that women miss out on information about, for example, labour saving devices and agricultural innovations. The barriers to women’s access and control are complex, combining cultural, religious and social elements. However, what is clear from this research is that any interventions designed to address issues of access and control need to be sensitive to both gender and ethnicity.

The Brahmin/Chhetri are generally considered to be a high caste, high status group and this status is, in part, maintained by the men exerting considerable control over their women. Even though they may have high levels of education (Devkota 1999), Brahmin/Chhetri women are often very restricted in terms of their movements beyond the household and their contact with outsiders. While they do have access to training, it is their men who control most income and have the greatest access to financial resources.

In contrast, Gurung women have a strong degree of independence in regard to certain household resources, including income, partly because their men are often away from home. These women also appear to have the greatest freedom of movement and voice, such as attending community meetings. Yet, like their Tharu and Brahmin/Chhetri counterparts, they cannot participate in study tours.

Tharu women seem at first to be considerably restricted, for example in not being able to attend meetings or to access agricultural or veterinary workers on their own. However, closer analysis shows that they are often able to do so in the company
of their men and they also have good access to training in conjunction with their men. In addition, they have greater control over specific arenas, such as the income derived from small animals.

What implications does this research have, then, for rural development policy and planning? Some suggestions:

- Access to extension workers might be improved by holding monthly group consultations for women on subjects of particular interest to them, for example small animals for Tharu women. This would give them a chance to ask questions, as well as to obtain updates and general information.
- Where community meetings are used as a forum for disseminating information on new local development initiatives and training opportunities, separate meetings for women, particularly those from Brahmin/Chhetri and Tharu groups, could help to increase their access to these resources.
- If a credit union were to be established in Chitwan district — a good idea, as the women have poor access to formal banking systems — the organisers would be well advised to target areas in which the women have some control over income. They could show Tharu women, for example, how small amounts of money put aside from the sale of small animals can build up over time, and could do the same for Brahmin/Chhetri women in regard to pension or remittance funds. Meanwhile, rural development workers could help Gurung women to gain the confidence to use the formal banking system, where this was an issue, because these women already have considerable skills in managing household finances.

This research has shown that women in rural Nepal generally have poorer access than men to services and less control over income, but this varies considerably with ethnicity. This finding has implications for development planning in other parts of the world. While it is pleasing to see increasing attention being paid to gender concerns in the rural development literature, it is crucial that, wherever multi-ethnic societies exist, planners and policy makers have information on ethnic disparities as well if they are to devise suitable strategies for future development.

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Understanding gender equality in organisations:  
A tool for assessment and action

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For most bilateral and multilateral development projects, the counterpart agency has already been decided long before implementation commences. Donor non government organisations (NGOs) also frequently have long-term commitments to counterparts, although the projects and programmes they support with these counterparts may change. Nevertheless, an assessment of counterpart institutional capacity to implement gender-sensitive activities is essential as early as possible in the project cycle, so that an informed judgement can be made of the likelihood of these issues being addressed adequately and appropriately, and so that appropriate strategies for strengthening this capacity can be explored and costed.

International experience shows that donor agencies (both bilateral and NGO) often focus on ‘gender training’ as the major or only strategy for promoting gender sensitivity and equality within organisations and development programmes. Frequently, training is one-off and is not followed up. Sometimes, it is not linked to agency procedures, tools or specific projects/programmes, and may not be geared to practical skill development. Training outcomes are generally poorly monitored or not monitored at all. Not surprisingly, progress towards the implementation of gender and development policy remains slow. Gender training is most usefully seen as only one of a number of potential strategies for promoting the implementation of gender equality policies.


**Strategic areas for institutional development to promote gender equality**

**Organisational mandate**

- Does the organisational vision, mission statement and/or constitution acknowledge the power inequalities between women and men?
- Does the mandate for promoting gender equality refer to women’s and men’s experiences, and gender relations (including the power inequalities that exist between men and women)?
- Is there equal representation of women on the board of the organisation?

**Policy on gender and development or gender equality**

- Is there a policy on gender and development, gender equality, or women in development, and how was it developed?
- Was the policy imposed?
- Are there processes to build ownership of, commitment to and understanding of policy and its implications by all important stakeholders? Do staff know about the policy or what is in it?
- What is the content of the policy? Does it focus on women’s human rights, gender equality and women’s strategic interests? Is there an accurate portrayal of the status of women, gender relations and women’s experiences, or does the policy have ‘idealised’ perceptions of women’s roles and workloads?
- Are there systems in place to ensure accountability to policy goals and objectives, in organisational structures, procedures and decision making processes? Is there an operational or strategic plan to implement the policy with measurable targets and indicators? Are there systems for monitoring progress towards policy implementation, such as consultations on gender equality outcomes, and regular review and audit procedures?

**Commitment to gender equality**

- Does the organisation ‘walk its talk’ on gender and development policy publicly and privately? Is there a real commitment to reflect on progress in this area and to take steps to improve performance?
- Is there evidence of senior and middle management commitment to policy, and responsibility and accountability for gender equality outcomes?
Is there a code of ethics? If so, does it cover and enforce issues such as domestic violence and sexual harassment?

When was a commitment to gender equality taken on? Has this commitment resulted in any review of policies, programmes and personnel management practices?

Organisational structure
- Is there a gender desk, unit or focal point which is responsible for ensuring that gender equality policy is implemented? If not, who is responsible for ensuring that gender issues are adequately addressed, and do they have the capacity and support to do this?
- Is there a gender focal point, where is this unit/desk located within the organisation? Is it strategically located, with clear links to senior management and field programme work? Does this unit/desk have authority and are the staff of the gender focal point respected?
- Do staff responsible for implementing gender policy have gender and development expertise? Are they adequately resourced within the organisation, or are they expected to carry out their gender and development responsibilities in their spare time, along with their normal duties?
- How are gender issues mainstreamed: is there acknowledgement that every staff member shares a responsibility to promote gender equality and implement policy? Are gender focal points seen as a valuable source of support and expertise; or is every matter concerning women seen as their responsibility and no one else's?
- Do organisational policy making, decision making and communication procedures provide opportunities for all members to participate?

Programmes, projects, activities and procedures
- Who benefits from the programmes, projects and activities carried out? Does reality match rhetoric about who benefits? Does the organisation know the impact of its activities and how this may differ for women and men?
- Is there an understanding of what authentic (versus tokenistic) mainstreaming means? Do women still only feature in 'women-only' projects?
- Is there an understanding of what authentic (versus tokenistic) mainstreaming means? Do women still only feature in 'women-only' projects?
- Does the organisation monitor and evaluate the impact of its activities on women and men and on gender relations? (Do organisational procedures facilitate/ensure that this happens?)
- Do activities focus on women's practical needs only or do they support women to define and meet their strategic interests, by challenging traditional perceptions, roles and responsibilities?

Building capacity: A learning organisation?
- Does the organisation have systems and processes for sharing lessons and good practice, from within the organisation and externally?
- Are formal and non-formal training opportunities provided for women, such as assertiveness, conflict resolution and leadership training?
- Are 'gender training' practical and linked to agency policy, mandate, procedures and programmes? Is training followed up to ensure that participants apply their skills and learning? Is gender training provided within a human rights perspective?

Personnel management practices
- Are equal employment opportunity and affirmative action principles and policies in place and applied in recruitment and personnel management?
- Do recruitment procedures identify gender equality commitment and gender analysis skills as essential or desirable criteria where appropriate?
- Is the promotion of gender equality and responsibility for gender equality outcomes included in duty statements?
- Do performance appraisal processes include an assessment of gender and development competence and identify strategies for improving staff capacity?
- Does the organisation have a sex-disaggregated employment profile? (See notes on this below.)
- Does the organisation have family-friendly work practices and policies, such as flexible working arrangements, maternal and paternal leave entitlements, and childcare and dependent care leave and support?
- Are sexual harassment policies and procedures in place and applied?
Organisational culture

Each of the above factors will have an impact on organisational culture, which also draws directly from the social and cultural context.

- Does the organisation have strategies for dealing with opposition and resistance to gender equality policy and programmes? Some possible strategies are:
  - harnessing political support and forming alliances within the organisation and country, and externally, to address resistance;
  - ensuring that the mandate for gender equality policy and programmes is clear, that it draws on a commitment to human rights, on women’s and men’s voices and experiences, and on sound and accurate gender analysis;
  - using informal and formal leaders as role models for gender-sensitive practice;
  - engaging in discussion and debate within the organisation on gender issues, to provide people with informal opportunities for learning and exposure to diverse views;
  - reinforcing the implications of policy, ensuring that it is seen as mandatory rather than optional and stressing accountability for implementing policy.

- The empowerment of women within organisations is critical for changing male-dominated cultures.

- Strength, commitment and credibility of gender focal points and senior management is also crucial for changing organisational culture.

Organisational context

- Does the government have a policy on women in development or gender and development, in national or sectoral planning documents? Is there a ‘women’s plan’ that can be referred to, to encourage change within the organisation (such as commitments made at the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995)?

- Is there a ‘national women’s machinery’, such as a ministry of women’s affairs, department or office, or national or provincial NGOs or councils that can be referred to, to encourage change?

- What other agencies or organisations are active in the sector or country on gender and development, and what is their approach to gender issues?

A sex-disaggregated employment profile

AusAID’s Guide to gender and development (1998:21) notes the importance of undertaking a sex-disaggregated employment profile in assessing counterpart agency capacity to implement gender-sensitive projects. The following are some issues to consider:

- Numbers of female and male staff according to seniority; occupation/role; management versus field positions (particularly in the project location); educational attainment; and access to training opportunities. It is important to assess whether women are marginalised into particular roles, and why. (For example, secretarial, nutrition or home economics for agricultural agencies; desk-based positions for police departments).

- Are there systems in place to monitor how men and women progress through the organisation, and to reflect on blocks to progress and develop strategies to address these blocks (so that women are encouraged to move into middle and senior levels in the organisation)?

- Approaches to gender issues in other projects and regions, for example recruitment of female staff, training of female staff, gender targeting of beneficiaries, awareness of impact on women.

- Levels of expertise regarding women’s roles in the sector, in terms of gender division of labour, access to and control over resources, approaches to planning for women (welfare-oriented, effectiveness concerns or equality). Locate sources of expertise within the agency.

- Communication strategies, and capacity for and commitment to participatory and consultative approaches to project implementation.

- Receptiveness to, knowledge or understanding of their own government’s and AusAID’s gender and development policy, and to different rationales for working with women (effectiveness, need, equality, sustainability).

Strengthening organisational capacity

These are tips only and are not comprehensive. Strategies need to be developed to suit the organisational and project context. In some cases, the best place to start may be with strategic planning to develop or review policy, or to ensure that there is a debate and shared understanding of policy. In others, strategic planning to implement policy may be a good starting-point.

Personnel management

- Identify female staff who can be involved in planning and implementation of the project, and cost any specific measures needed to support their ongoing participation and involvement in project decision making.

- Set targets and devise strategies for the recruitment of female staff.

- Resource female field staff adequately and monitor the use of these resources.

- Actively monitor barriers to female participation within the agency and develop appropriate
strategies for overcoming these barriers. For example, ensure that adequate and safe transport and housing is available and take into account women's family responsibilities.

- Monitor the tendency for female staff to be marginalized to administrative or 'traditional female' roles.

**Training**

- Provide project focused and practical gender training for expatriate and local staff, which directly addresses women's and men's roles and responsibilities in the sector, their access to resources and their priorities for production and consumption, and project-specific strategies for addressing gender issues.
- Provide bridging training for female staff.
- Ensure that training and responsibilities for female and male staff are equivalent.
- Set targets for female participation in all areas of training, and outline how targets will be met.
- Identify women eligible for management, research and other higher level training.
- Monitor and report on progress in meeting training targets.

In a World Bank funded agricultural extension project in Cameroon (Walker 1990), significant increases were achieved in the recruitment of female staff, in staff training and in the adaptation of extension methods to reach women farmers. Strategies used included:

- equivalent intensive training for all recruits, including rural sociology and farming systems;
- using contact groups in addition to contact farms, including existing formal and informal women's groups;
- selecting 'leader farmers', half of whom were women, to provide demonstration fields;
- providing credit for both cash and food crops (men's and women's crops);
- gender targeting, where groups were initially and temporarily contacted by extension agents of the same gender;
- monitoring of gender impact, which saw the project evolve from neglect of women, to integrated activities and special women's focus.

**Participation and consultation strategies**

- Review communication strategies to ensure that women know of the project and have realistic opportunities for participation.
- Where necessary, organize or support separate groups of men and women as vehicles for communication with the project. If separate groups are not appropriate, monitor women's participation in mixed groups.
- Identify local formal and informal women's groups which could act as channels for communication and participation, and monitor membership and access to resources through these groups.
- Ensure that the scheduling of project activities (daily and seasonal), particularly opportunities for participation and consultation, do not clash with women's highest priority tasks.
- Actively monitor barriers to female participation in the project and develop appropriate strategies for overcoming these barriers.

**Negotiation**

- Use rationales for gender-sensitive approaches which will appeal to hostile or indifferent staff in counterpart agencies, such as efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability concerns.
- Demonstrate the economic benefits of involving and supporting women, both female staff and in the community. Demonstrate the costs of neglecting women.
- Draw on local government's statements/rationales for involving and supporting women and men in development planning and implementation.
- Identify in-country advocates for gender-sensitive approaches, and possible networks to support key women in the counterpart agency.

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Gender and livelihood in an upland community forestry project in Bangladesh

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The context

Although there has been a burgeoning of literature on community forestry (CF) in general, research on gender issues in community based afforestation schemes has been somewhat limited. This is particularly true in the context of CF initiatives in Bangladesh, where gender has usually been treated as an 'add-on' or a 'compartment' of CF projects. This approach is manifested in the mainstream literature (Ahmed 1994, Biswas and Magno 1987, Day 1996, Khan 1998, Magno and Ali undated, Mahat 1993), which typically includes a cursory chapter on or a brief account of 'women in CF' while discussing other issues. Rather than this piecemeal, insipid and superficial treatment of gender issues, a more comprehensive, preferably holistic, approach to CF development is needed, one that considers gender as an integral and inseparable part of any meaningful and rigorous analysis of developmental initiatives. Underwood (1991:296) echoes the above concern for a reorientation of development thinking:

It is clear we can not have a separate development compartment labelled 'gender' ... We should not think of the 'kinds of projects to be undertaken for women' or 'the strategy to be adopted in women's projects' - this is a compartmentalized view of the gender problem. Inappropriate projects and strategies are inappropriate - whether for men, women or the community. We need to develop our gender perspective so that it is an integral part of all our development work and not a separate compartment on the development 'train'.

CF has become the mainstay of public forestry activities in Bangladesh and the government has attached the highest priority to the development of these participatory afforestation schemes (FMP 1992, Government of Bangladesh 1992, Task Force 1987). In line with this dominant trend in the forestry sector, a CF programme (the Upland Settlement Project: Second Phase [USP]) was launched in 1993 in the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT). The stated goal of the project is to

... improve the socioeconomic condition [and] to redress the poverty of the ethnic people and environmental degradation in the region by creating employment opportunities with income generating activities as well as providing a basis of livelihood by improving their farm income and ensuring food security (USP undated).

So far, 1,000 landless and desperately poor ethnic families (equally distributed in the districts of Khagrachari and Bandarban) have been settled in suitable sloping (public) lands. The project area is divided into a number of 'project villages', each comprising 50 families. The participating farmers are required to practise agroforestry, with the aim of raising 506 hectares (ha) of homestead plantation (0.5 ha for each family) and 1,620 ha of rubber plantations in individual compact blocks of 81 ha (1.6 ha for each family). The government's CHT Development Board administers the project. One distinct characteristic of the project is that its managers and staff have attempted to develop the above-mentioned 'holistic' perspective in the analysis, research and treatment of the development work and plans.

Given the above context, the project managers felt that an ethnographic survey was necessary in order to develop a systematic and comprehensive understanding of
the complexities of the lives of the participating farming households, with a particular focus on women (in relation to men). The rationale behind understanding the surrounding socioeconomy of the project area is simply illustrated by Brokensha and Castro (1984:1): 'Strategies for natural resource management can not logically be considered except in relationship to their specific social setting. They are a part of a complex system of relationships and institutions'.

Accordingly, systematic research, consisting chiefly of the anthropological tools of uncontrolled participant observation, ethno-history analysis, social mapping, 'walk and talk' and semi-structured interviews, is currently under way (for a detailed account of the methodology and the sample frame, see Khan 1998 and USP 1998). The primary aim is to delve into the gender and context-specific activities of the farming households in selected sites of the study area. The project intends to document and record detailed information on the activities, livelihood, changes and survival strategies of members of the target households, through intense observations over a reasonably long period of time (the scheduled research span is two and half years, subject to availability of resources). The research has an applied and exploratory focus, and the research team works closely with the project field staff. In what follows, I will furnish some preliminary findings, with particular reference to the women's daily activities (in relation to the men).

**Gender and work in the study area**

The women's daily work and labour input fall into two broad categories: 'household chores', which include cooking for the whole family, child care, cleaning house and utensils, washing clothes, fetching water, livestock and poultry rearing, firewood collection, and handicrafts; and 'agroforestry activities', which include managing home and horticultural gardens and processing harvested crops. On average, the women work for 15–16 hours a day (see Box 1).

Typically, there is a gender division of labour in the study area in the management of home gardens and associated agroforestry activities, with the women playing a more active and intensive role in the development and maintenance of the home gardens (Table 1).

---

**Box 1  A typical day in the life of a woman in the project area**

**Morning hours**

I get up from bed at the first hint of dawn. After the morning wash, I walk down the hill to the stream to fetch water. If no man is present, I avail myself of the opportunity of a quick bath therein. By the time I go back home, the children are up and moving. I go straight to the kitchen and start preparing the breakfast. As the cooking proceeds, I mop up the front and back yards and feed the animals. One of my sons goes to the local 'project school'. I have to help him get ready for the school. After the breakfast I wash the utensils and clean the kitchen. My two daughters help me in cleaning up the mess. After a while, when 'my man' (husband) is resting or has gone out to the city centre or to the project office, I prepare the food for lunch and then proceed towards the rubber plantation.

**Noon time**

I return home from the rubber plantation when the sun is on top of my head. I serve the lunch for the whole family. My elder daughter assists me in the table. After the meal, we wash up the utensils at home; however, some larger pans and kitchenware need to be taken to the stream for a thorough wash and cleaning. We do not have enough water here (in our home which is located) on top of the hill. I then follow my husband to the (agroforestry and home) gardens. By then it is 'deep' noon and I sometimes feel exhausted.

**Afternoon**

I work in the gardens all through the afternoon. I have to fetch fuelwood too. In the dry season, I have to go 'behind the dark valleys' (a distance of about 3 miles). At times, my man and I rest in the shades (of the trees) and talk about urgent family affairs. We return home when the sky starts getting reddish and the birds fly back to their nests. I then help the children take a bath; often I enjoy a bath myself. I also wash most of the dirty clothes immediately after the bath. I, with the help of my sons, secure the animals, feed them and place them in the sheds. By then the sun has gone (set).

**Evening and night**

I mop the homestead in the early hours of evening and prepare for cooking the dinner. The cooking time is about one hour and meal is served immediately afterwards. After the meal, the family sits in the front yard or in the right hand side room, which is a bit more airy. We then talk about some problems - the problems are so many! (such as) pest attack or water shortage in the gardens, scarcities of food or money, marriage of my daughter, repairing the house and so on. After that, if I feel like, I sit with my daughter to do some sewing and knitting (handicrafts). The front and back yards need to be checked before we go to sleep. The chickens and cows are frequently attacked by wild animals: snakes, wild cat, foxes, etc. There are thieves too. We go to sleep quite late at night, but I can not tell you the time; I do not have a watch. If it is a moonlit night, we retire to bed when the moon has covered the whole of the hill and the valleys, and the air is 'soft and sounding'.

**Note:** This statement was originally recorded in the local dialect. Subsequently it was translated and then read back to the woman concerned for accuracy and authenticity. She made some corrections to the statement. The subtitles (for example, 'morning hours', 'noon time') and the words in parentheses have been added by the research team.
Table 1  Typical gender division in the management of home gardens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raising seedlings in poly bags</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing seed beds</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearing and burning jungle, preparing the site</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting debris</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digging deep pits</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digging narrow ditches for watering</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sowing or planting (as the case may be)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting cow dung as fertiliser</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making protective gabion</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grafting particular plants</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watering</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulching</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2  The major (and most commonly observed) decision areas and decision makers in the study households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision areas</th>
<th>Decision makers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selecting planting and gardening site</td>
<td>Key male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining type, quality and quantity of seedlings</td>
<td>Key female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and amount of seed sown in agroforestry plots</td>
<td>Joint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and amount of seed sown in home gardens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling the varied agroforestry and horticultural products (which grow in the project)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and amount of household savings</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The time, heads, and amount of expenditure for day-to-day running of the household</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tending operations in the agroforestry plantations</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending social and religious festivals and events</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting city centre(s)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social visits to friends, patrons and relatives</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying landed assets</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of doctors, medicine, location of treatment</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairing and renovating huts, livestock, sheds, etc.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source, time and amount of borrowing</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source, time and amount of repayment</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopting of particular strategies in the face of natural calamities (e.g. droughts, cyclones)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining external organisations (e.g. voluntary associations, public agencies)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to 'outsiders'</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The key male is generally the father/husband or the elder brother/son; the key female is generally the mother/wife or the elder daughter/sister; and joint decisions are made through a consultative process between the key male and female members (and sometimes other earning adult members).
Gender and household decision making

In the study area, a household typically connotes a nuclear family whose members have a collective budget and act as a single unit of consumption, production and decision making. Major day-to-day decisions are generally made in some form of consultation between the active (adult) members of the household, including the male head (father, elder brother, or son), the key female figure (wife or mother of the head of the household) and other earning members. The consultation mainly occurs in the leisurely family settings immediately after the supper at night, and/or in between the breaks during agroforestry planting and home-garden maintenance. At times, important relatives and neighbours are also invited to participate in the discussion leading to decisions about major family events, especially marriage or acquiring landed assets. On the basis of frequency and significance (to the respective households), a number of major decision areas have been noted during the fieldwork (Table 2).

Women and cooperation

The women participating in the project are by no means a uniform group. Such variables as the wealth, status, ethnic origin, size and demographic composition of the household cut across the female community, ultimately producing a complex and heterogeneous entity. Although the women are very active within the bounds of their respective households and farms, they are not readily or automatically interested in forming groups or cooperatives with other women (representing different households and socioeconomic formations). Limited and selective cooperation and collective actions ensue from crisis situations, such as natural disasters, scarcity of productive equipment, and financial hardship. Similar observations on the limited prospect of rural cooperation and on the crisis-led temporary nature of collective actions have been reported in the major literature concerning South Asia (Artwood and Baviskar 1988, Jansen 1986, Khan 1998, Zaman 1984).

Encounters with the outside world

Women seldom move beyond the territory of their intimate 'informal' sector of households, farms and neighbourhood. The 'formal' sectors of, for example, the public and local government offices, banks, markets and hospitals are not considered to be comfortable destinations for women, and these areas are traditionally men's domains. However, in the project area, it has been observed that some women, especially those from relatively well-off households, negotiate access to the project and local government offices through their men (that is, husband, brothers, sons). With the exception of share-tending of animals, the women seek the presence and involvement of men when dealing with any formal social or economic transactions (for example, selling agroforestry products to traders and their agents).

Conclusion

This description and analysis of selected gender issues in the study area is incomplete in the sense that we have generated much more information than can be presented and analysed here. Besides, the above observations are part of a broader research scheme which is still being carried out. Further explorations will help us to develop a much fuller picture of the field situation. The study (and the observations) so far, however, reiterate the vital importance of developing a thorough understanding of gender in CF through the adoption of a holistic research approach, especially in the Bangladeshi context. This project (along with the associated research exercise), despite its limitations, seems to be a step in the right direction in that it attempts, in its own modest way, to unearth and trace a human odyssey: how men and women act, interact and play in an intrinsically complicated social setting.

Notes

1. There is no universally accepted definition of CF. In Bangladesh it is used as an umbrella term for such public and communal initiatives which aim at ensuring active participation by the rural people in planning, implementation and benefit sharing of tree-growing schemes (Task Force 1987:1, see also Khan 1998). CF is viewed within the broader framework of rural development in Bangladesh (Alim 1988). It primarily includes afforestation programmes in marginal and degraded state forest lands, village woodlot, farm forestry, and strip plantations alongside railways, highways and embankments.

2. For the purpose of this study, 'gender' connotes the socioculturally determined and context-specific roles assigned to both sexes. Brett (1991:2-3) further elaborates:

   Sex is concerned with biology, whereas gender identity of men and women in any given society is socially and psychologically (and that means also historically and culturally) determined.... To determine gender, social and cultural perceptions of masculine and feminine traits and roles must be taken into account.... Gender is learnt through a process of socialisation and through the culture of the particular society concerned.

3. The Chittagong Hill Tract comprises the three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. This terrain is the largest mountainous region of the country and is located between 21°25' and 23°45' North and between 91°45' and 92°50' East, covering an area of 13,294 square kilometres. One distinct feature of this area is that it is traditionally the home of at least 13 ethnic communities.

Acknowledgements

The views expressed here are solely the author's responsibility; the usual disclaimer applies. Thanks are due to the staff of the USP, Khagrachari. I am particularly indebted to Sudibya Kanti Khisa (Project Manager, USP).
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Conditions, concerns and needs of garment workers in Bangladesh

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Introduction

Bangladesh presently exports ready-made garments (RMG) to about 30 countries around the world. It has over one million women workers who form over 60 per cent of production workers in the RMG factories. More women, whether pushed by poverty or pulled by opportunity, are working outside the home. The presence of large numbers of unaccompanied women on the buses and in the streets caused disapproving comment in the popular press, in research reports and even ironically from the mosques. This picture is fast changing as women are migrating to urban areas for work in the manufacturing sector. What does this movement mean?

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted during June–September 1999. I attempted to ascertain the conditions, concerns and needs of female factory workers through their narratives. Such narratives helped me to understand their perspective on factory work, migration, the problems of living in the city, and their needs arising from all of these factors. Policy makers could solve many problems by implementing factory laws and modifying, changing or enforcing other laws and policies. Employers could contribute to the welfare of the workers in general if policy makers offered tax incentives.

I conducted in-depth interviews with 35 Gulshan and Badda women workers. It took some time for them to understand that it was all right to talk to me. In the beginning they were hesitant for a number of reasons. First, they had no experience with anyone who expressed interest in their conditions, concerns and needs. Second, they feared that the management had sent me to check on them. Then why don’t the employers do something about this?

Working conditions

In the garment industry in Bangladesh, tasks are allocated largely on the basis of gender. This determines many of the working conditions of the women workers. All the workers in the sewing section are women, while almost all those in the cutting, ironing, and finishing sections are men.

I started interviewing in the middle of June in the midst of heavy rains. What is the rainy season like for the garment workers? Their legs are their only means of transportation. In rain, in sun, in times of political strikes, in health and sickness, they have to reach the factory by 8.00 am, six or, often, seven days a week.

The workers get soaked in the heavy downpours between June and October. Those who have two sets of saris or salwar kameez change after reaching work. Those who do not, work 8–12 hours in wet clothes. Piyara (a married garment worker) said that she became sick with a high fever because of working in a wet sari. However, she still went to work the next day because, if she absents herself for one day, two days of wages are deducted from her pay and she cannot afford the deduction. She is a helper, earning Tk900 (A$30) per month with overtime. Her house rent is Tk800. Her entire family is dependent on her most of the time, as her husband is often out of work because of sickness. She works because it helps her to earn a living for her family. They migrated from Barisal and have no plans to go back to the village, where they often starved. They cannot forget those painful memories of poverty, hunger and frustration. They often starve in Dhaka too and yet Piyara, like other members of her family, does not want to leave. The garment factory is there, so there is a means of income.

Women workers suffer from female related diseases because of the unhygienic condition of factory latrines. Some employers told me that if they spent another Tk500 (A$17) per month (for an extra cleaner), hygiene could be substantially improved. Then why don’t the employers do it? Because the law enforcing agencies are not strict. There are labour laws and factory laws, but mostly in theory, not much in practice. Young women workers migrating from the villages can be city toilet trained and this should not cost much in terms of money or time. The women avoid drinking water while they are at work so as to avoid having to go to smelly and dirty toilets.

Fatema had a miscarriage in one of these factory toilets. She did not have any medical treatment and did not take leave of absence from work because of the huge cost. This has compounded her health problems because she continued with her usual heavy workload at the factory after the miscarriage.

Transportation

Factory women walk 4–5km each day. Without effort they have formed a line. This is why they are so visible. They form the silver lining of a road. They walk to save daily commuting costs. For a person having to pay Tk800 for a room from a wage of Tk700–1,000, it is more than essential to walk. So much walking every day takes its toll on workers’ health, particularly that of women. The situation is worse at night because of the fear of being raped. This adds mental stress to physical stress.

All the 35 workers interviewed agreed that every single night, when they leave work, they fear men will stop them on the dark...
roads and take away their izzat (virtue). They fear mostly construction workers, who coincidentally are migrants too.

Employers should provide transportation for women workers, at least from the factory to the nearest point of their squatter settlements or places of accommodation. It would cost less than a woman's izzat. Regular and secure transport would ensure that workers turned up on time, that the women would be physically less stressed and could channel their energy into their work, would reduce sicknesses and absenteeism, particularly in the rainy season, and might engender a sense of loyalty amongst the women.

Why women work

Competing views in the literature suggest that women in the RMG sector in Bangladesh work because of economic hardship and because of an economic incentive for securing marriage potential. They pay house rent, buy rice and fuel for cooking and, after starving at least ten to twelve days in any given month, they manage to feed their children with potato, rice and spinach.

I have always thought of my family first. My husband. My children. I have worked in a factory even when I did not like it because we needed the money ... Life is very difficult in Dhaka. Life was difficult in the village too. That is why we left the village. ... I have no education, no money. I want my kids to have a better life than mine. I want them to be educated. I want them to have a better life.

Shapna (former garment worker)

I am working because I have responsibilities to look after my grandmother and parents. I have made it clear to them that I will save Tk400 for myself (for my wedding) every month. They have no problem with it. Because I work I can save. Therefore, I have to keep on working.

Lovely (18 year-old worker)

Adjusting to a 'modern' life

The literature also suggests that, although most of these women are insecure on the streets and often at work, they are becoming empowered and becoming modern through employment. They play an important role in decision making in their households and are able to do things outside the home more independently than ever before (like shopping for groceries in an open market or buying themselves a ribbon or cosmetics, thereby having purchasing power). The fact that they are wearing lipstick (purchasing lipstick) and going to the cinema (purchasing ticket) is often cited to indicate that they are adopting modern ways of life.

The women's narratives indicate that they are becoming 'modern' in order to meet the requirements of city life:

Recently I bought a cotton sari for Tk250 (A$8). The price is a bit high, don't you think? My monthly pay is Tk900 (A$30). I could not bargain very well [for the sari]. Reduced ten taka only. I bought it from a feriwal. It was difficult for me to pay so much. I have bought this because it is needed for work in a garment factory. If I wear torn and dirty clothes, people will think badly of me.

Hurmoti (garment helper)

Women workers opt for matching clothes, cheap jewellery and cosmetics (usually kajal and lipstick) in order to be acceptable when applying for a job or when on the job (working with others and outside of one's own house). This is why they also attempt to look clean and smart in their sari or salwar kameez and hairdo. The women are not consciously breaking away from tradition or trying to be modern. They cover their heads only when they feel unsafe. They are not deliberately trying to be 'modern', a term not used in their narratives. Instead, they talked about their need to 'adjust' to the urban way of life. They use up their nominal savings on these necessities and so have nothing left for buying houses or investing and so forth.

Mobility and entertainment

Women's mobility is very limited. They have very little exposure to city entertainment and facilities because they do not have the time, most of them are unaware of the existence of special attractions and they are scared to venture into new places. They depend on their husbands for entertainment but, mostly, the husband never has time to take his wife and children anywhere. Usually, he is too tired after work, is sick or has spent his leisure with his friends. Although the women may be wearing starched saris with six or seven folds (kuchis), like middle and upper class women, they do not have complete control of their lives unless they live alone. My interviewees have accepted the hardship of commuting on foot, whatever the weather, because they cannot manage to save money for their transport after meeting household expenditures.

Control over income

In most cases, single women workers live with a distant relative and hand over their wages to the older guardian for household expenses. I found that married women have very little control over their expenditure. Wives do not question their husband's spending. Working wives tend not to question because it only creates more friction. It is better to remain silent.

A woman's monthly wages are usually geared to the welfare of the entire family, often a voluntary act borne out of necessity or a sense of responsibility. She tries her best to meet everybody else's needs by reducing her own. Her food intake, in particular, is cut down, along with any other desires. Although she is earning money, she will buy a sari or a two-strapped sponge sandal only when absolutely necessary. Working mothers find it difficult to give pocket money to their school children almost every day. Children tend to dislike taking lunch boxes, preferring to buy chocolates, lozenges and lollies from vendors and share them with their peers. This kind of regular expenditure reduces even further her nominal savings, if any.

March 2000
My interviewees have no bank accounts or any long-term saving strategies. They were not sure what they would do if all the factories closed down tomorrow and they had to make ends meet.

Migration from the villages

Some studies assert that women workers are challenging certain societal norms and traditions, by delaying marriage, marrying someone of their own choice and working outside the home by migrating from the village, often with a non-relative. In other words, women are gradually moving on independently because of migration to urban centres.

All of my 35 interviewees were migrants. Some had migrated to Dhaka because of the 1988 floods, others because of the overall poverty-stricken condition of their villages. They had starved for days because of a lack of purchasing power. Some young women left their villages in order to preserve their izzat. Whatever the reason, the existence of factories in the city gave all of the women alternatives and opportunities.

Coping strategies

The literature asserts that women are still under strong patriarchal control and are caught between traditional values (saving for dowry and marriage) and modernity (earning through factory work). They are burdened with a double day's work, face discrimination in terms of wage and gender differentials, work in poor conditions, and are unsafe on the streets. They also face accommodation and transportation difficulties, as they are mainly migrant workers. However, despite these problems, they are reluctant to unionise and, instead, have developed their own coping strategies in a big city. They cover themselves, or maintain purdah, not because of religion but because they have discovered that men disturb them less if they wear their odna (shawl) or anchol. They tend to live in areas where there are other garment workers.

Conclusion

All 35 women workers have expressed their willingness to stay and work in factories in Dhaka. Although they are not happy with their working and living conditions, they know they are somewhat better off just by being employed in factories in Dhaka.

Had there been factories in the villages, would these same young women have worked there and not migrated? What if they were given a choice to go back and work in a factory if one were established in their village? The questions pose a dilemma for the workers. There is always a long pause, the answer is a smile, and it is as mysterious as the smile of da Vinci's Mona Lisa.

Most of the workers believe that it is only possible for them to work in a factory, and particularly with men, because they are away in the city, beyond the gossip and values of neighbours and relatives. Villagers still think that home is the appropriate place for women. Although not recognised, women do agricultural work, which is accepted because they are at or near home and usually with relatives. Industrial work, however, is still taboo. It would be a great challenge for these women to work in a garment factory in their own villages. However, if it became a choice between such work and regular starvation, perhaps they would have to work in factories. And once the trend was set, we all know how traditional norms and taboos soon disintegrate. Interestingly, 'society' becomes more than willing to embrace the new workers called 'women' because they become the new agents called 'consumers' who pump money into the system through the consumption of goods like cosmetics, clothing and food. We did not have to wait for 100 years to see the change, although Bangladesh is considered to be a very conservative country, especially in terms of women's emancipation. The factory women are everywhere: on the streets, in the market, in the cinemas and around the roadside tea stalls. This regular visibility has contributed immensely to general acceptance.

However, from the findings it is evident that patriarchal control characterises gender relations in Bangladesh. Co-existence of traditional values and religion with modern ways of life are affecting women workers both at home and outside home. This is compounded by problems of housing, transportation and security in the city. They are adopting cost benefit analyses and exhibiting rational choice behaviour in regard to the following: rural or urban living, urban factory work or rural domestic work, purdah for religion or purdah for security, early marriage without adequate savings or late marriage with substantial savings. Women understand that their importance as income-earners is fast increasing. Economic relations are changing and becoming more visible.
The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade conducted a one-day seminar on 'World debt', in Canberra in August 1999. Following a series of presentations during the day, the committee's report, tabled in Parliament on 6 December 1999, carried several recommendations for government response.

The debt of the world's poorest nations is an issue of concern for many people in Australia and around the world. The petition of 385,000 signatures from Australians that was presented to members of parliament clearly demonstrates the depth of feeling in the community about the debt issue. The Australian petition formed a part of a global petition of some 17 million signatures, which was delivered to the June 1999 meeting of the G7 nations in Cologne.

The debate about development has evolved in recent years. Debt is one of the fundamental problems inhibiting growth in the poorest nations of the world and there is a belief that debt and a failure to develop are intrinsically linked: highly indebted nations are unable to attract investment or to invest in their own social capital because of the debt burden they carry. The highly indebted poor country (HIPC) initiative was the first comprehensive attempt to alleviate this situation.

The HIPC initiative
In 1996, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) launched the HIPC initiative in a bid to reduce some of the debt of the poorest nations. Debt forgiveness under the initiative was made conditional on these nations' liberalising their economic sectors in an attempt to correct perceived deficiencies in their economies. However, criticisms have focused on the initiative's strict qualifying criteria, the limited amount of debt forgiveness and the long compliance period that countries must adhere to before debt forgiveness is offered.

In response to the continuing debt crisis and the perceived shortcomings of the HIPC initiative, the Jubilee 2000 coalition began campaigning for greater debt forgiveness for the poorest nations by the year 2000, on moral and ethical grounds. In June 1999, G7 leaders agreed to the Cologne Debt Initiative, which will relax some of the criteria for access to debt relief and, most importantly, will substantially increase the amount of money offered for debt forgiveness. It was to this meeting that the Jubilee 2000 coalition presented its petition.

The seminar
The Parliamentary Secretary then responsible for Australia's aid programme, the Hon. Kathy Sullivan MP, opened the seminar and the panel of speakers included representatives of Jubilee 2000 and several other non-government organisations (NGOs). The seminar was balanced by the inclusion of academics and officers of government departments, and was very well attended by members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of government and NGOs and other interested parties. The transcript of the seminar formed the basis for the committee's report.

The report
The seminar found that Australia bears little responsibility for the indebtedness of other nations and that the role that the Australian Government can play in reducing such debt is somewhat limited. The committee's report focuses, therefore, on the concrete objectives that Australia can pursue in attempting to reduce poverty in the world's poorest, and other developing, nations.
In the report, the committee recognised the need for a fine balance between the human cost of doing nothing, and the debt crisis continuing, and the monetary cost of the Jubilee 2000 proposals for debt relief. It is on this basis that the committee recommended the government's continued support for the HIPC initiative.

Australia does not have a great deal of bilateral debt owed to it by other nations, and even less of that debt is not being serviced. This is largely a result of prudent decisions to offer development assistance in the form of grants, not loans. The seminar was told that the size of these debts totalled less than A$80 million. In the spirit of the HIPC initiative, the committee recommended that Australia offer this bilateral debt to be considered as part of any future contributions to the revised HIPC initiative, where those countries are permitted and agree to meet HIPC conditions.

Despite the IMF proposal to revalue some of its reserves of gold in order to pay for it, the HIPC initiative will not be fully funded. It is on the basis of this expected shortfall that the committee recommended that the Australian Government give consideration to additional contributions towards the initiative, in line with Australia's levels of obligation to the IMF and the World Bank.

It was also recommended that the Australian Government give consideration to increasing substantially the current levels of Australian official development assistance (ODA). This recommendation is consistent with the government continuing to endorse a ratio of 0.7 per cent of GNP to be spent on development assistance.

The committee also heard of the problems with putting conditions on granting debt forgiveness. It was made clear that the problem is a serious one. The committee therefore recommended that the government negotiate a form of conditionality which will prevent the expenditure of these funds on military equipment or corrupt practices.

In conclusion, the committee believed that debt relief may be a circuit breaker, but it is not a panacea for the development of the world's poorest countries. Development will only flow from a country's genuine commitment to improving the material conditions of its peoples, along with the basic policies and robust institutions that are essential to growth.

The committee's recommendations

1. Continued government support for the HIPC initiative and Review.
2. Government should consider increasing substantially the current levels of Australian ODA, consistent with the endorsement of a 0.7 per cent ODA/GNP ratio.
3. Australia should offer its bilateral debt as part of any future contributions to the revised initiative, where those countries are permitted and agree to meet HIPC conditions.
4. Maintenance of the government policy of opposing the sale of IMF gold reserves.
5. The Australian Government should consider additional contributions towards the HIPC initiative, in line with Australia's levels of obligation to the IMF and World Bank.
6. The government should negotiate a form of conditionality which will prevent the expenditure of funds, freed by debt forgiveness, on military equipment or corrupt practices.

The committee is awaiting government response to this report. Full copies of the report are available from the Committee Secretariat on +61 (0)2 6277 2313 or by visiting: http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/seminars/wdprinx.htm

Jon Bonnar, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Parliament House

Facts and fancies of human development

Canberra, Australia, 8 November 1999

The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia held its Annual Symposium and Cunningham Lecture in November 1999. The symposium (on the theme of Facts and fancies of human development) discussed the progress of human development in Australia and, especially, across the world. In their presentations, scholars

- presented and evaluated the evidence about long-run economic progress worldwide and about the impact of change on social conditions, poverty and equality;
- explored the way in which this evidence is used and, increasingly, misused. (A prime target was the UNDP Human Development Report); and
- examined the current state, and weaknesses, of the global statistical system.

Speakers included Angus Maddison (leading scholar in the comparative study of economic performance in time and space, now retired); David Henderson (Visiting Fellow, Melbourne Business School); Ian Castles (Visiting Professor, Sydney Business School); Frank Fieff (Chairman of the Executive of the Council, Australian Academy of Social Sciences); and Marion McEwin (Social Statistics Branch, Australian Bureau of Statistics).

The published proceedings of both the 1999 Symposium (Facts and fancies of human development) and the Cunningham Lecture (Pushing back the frontiers of death, by Professor John C. Caldwell) will be available in April. Requests can be made by telephoning +61 (0)2 6249 1788 or by e-mail: ASSA.Secretariat@anu.edu.au

Sue Rider, Project Officer, Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia
Australian Pacific healthy cities
Canberra, Australia, 8–10 March 2000

The objectives of this conference are to provide an appropriate platform for the presentation and discussion of Healthy Cities and Healthy Islands projects and initiatives in Australia and the Pacific; develop an awareness of the value of a healthy cities approach in responding to the challenges of community health development; encourage the communities’ voice of experience balanced with the findings of policy makers and academics; assist the World Health Organization in the building of an Australian–Pacific regional network that can sustain individuals and groups in their work for the healthy cities movement; and develop and enhance the skills of community members, health service/environment/education professionals, policy makers and researchers.

For more information contact:
Healthy Cities Conference
Secretariat, ConSec
PO Box 3127
Belconnen Delivery Centre
ACT 2617
Australia
Tel +61 2 6251 0675
Fax +61 2 6251 0672
E-mail consecc@spirit.com.au
Web http://www.healthycitiescanberra.org.au

Melanesia 2000 and beyond: Empowering village and rural development
Port Moreby, Papua New Guinea, 13–16 March 2000

Many Papua New Guinea citizens, residents and overseas supporters share a concern that Papua New Guinea needs to acquire a clearer vision and plan of action for the economic and social future of the country going into the next century. At the same time in an era of unfettered capital markets, globalisation, and environmental degradation there are very disturbing trends in industrialised economies both east and west which should give Papua New Guineans cause for concern. The goal of this conference is to provide a forum for discussion of a vision for Papua New Guinea/Melanesia in the 21st century and to develop a framework for realising that vision.

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Web http://www.pngbuai.com/

Sustainable urban development in the new millennium
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 20–23 March 2000

Urbanisation is taking place at a very rapid rate in Asia as its city and town population continue to grow relentlessly. The region already has the largest population in the world, with about 700 million people now living in cities and towns. By 2015, it is estimated that the region will have more than one billion people living in cities. There will be nine megacities with populations of more than ten million and 17 very large cities with populations of more than five million. Economically and environmentally sustainable urban development in Asia is therefore a pressing need to ensure a safe, healthy, convenient and pleasant environment for its burgeoning urban population. POLMET (Pollution in Metropolitan Cities) is a series of conferences and exhibitions held triennially on the development and sustainability of metropolitan Asian cities. POLMET 2000 will address both global and regional views, experiences and practices within the framework of legislation and policy, assessment, institutional arrangement, funding mechanism, planning and implementation, public awareness, education and training.

For more information contact:
Environmental Management and Research Association of Malaysia
20A Jalan SS2/72
47300 Petaling Jaya
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Tel +603 717 7588
Fax +603 717 7596
E-mail ensearch@tm.net.my
Web http://www.ensearch.org/conferences/polmet.htm

Food in the Pacific and Asia
Canberra, Australia, 27–28 April 2000

The Centre for the Contemporary Pacific is planning a two-day conference on food as a mediator in intercultural relations and invites papers from scholars across a range of disciplines as well as people from the region who have a special interest or expertise in relevant aspects of food in social and cultural contexts. Many aspects of food lend themselves to social elaboration. Food can be seen as a social bond, as a medium of exchange and as a potent marker of identity, and can mark or mediate relationships between different cultural groups. It can also shape perceived boundaries between different groups and individuals. The provenance of different foods, the modes of organisation required in their production and the ways and means of transforming raw foods into cooked meals all play their part in shaping cultural notions of self and other.

For more information contact:
Centre for the Contemporary Pacific
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
The Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
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Tel +61 2 6249 2170
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E-mail mburns@coombs.anu.edu.au
Web http://rspas.anu.edu.au/ccp/workshops.htm#FOOD

March 2000
Health promotion: Bridging the equity gap

Mexico City, Mexico, 5–9 June 2000

The World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization and the Ministry of Health of Mexico are collaborating to prepare the Fifth Global Conference on Health Promotion (5GCHP), an event which will focus on demonstrating how health promotion strategies add value to the effectiveness of health and development policies, programmes and projects, particularly those which seek to improve the health and quality of life of people living in adverse circumstances. The conference objectives are to show how health promotion makes a difference to health and quality of life, especially for people living in adverse conditions; to place health high on the development agenda of international, national and local agencies; and to stimulate partnerships for health between different sectors and at all levels of society.

For more information contact:
World Health Organization
Health Promotion Department
Avenue Appia 20
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland
Tel +41 22 791 3920
Fax +41 22 791 4186
E-mail 5ghcp@who.int
Web http://www.who.int/hpr/conference/index.html

Crossroads in cultural studies


This is the third International Crossroads in Cultural Studies conference. The conference aims to be a meeting place for people within cultural studies to make contacts, exchange views and gain inspiration from each other on all topics that interest such a diverse international community. Participation is encouraged from different countries, disciplines and cultural backgrounds, and from a wide range of research interests. Proposals are invited on topics such as cultures of everyday life, social and cultural theory media, difference and identity, globalisation and diaspora, power and knowledge, new technologies, the city, culture and economy, and cultural policy.

For more information contact:
Crossroads Conference
Department of Cultural Studies and Sociology
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT
United Kingdom
E-mail crossroads@css.bham.ac.uk
Web http://www.bham.ac.uk/crossroads/

World forum on social development: Copenhagen commitments and the United Nations

Geneva, Switzerland, 22–30 June 2000

Organised by the International Research Foundation for Development, this conference aims to mobilise academics, policy makers, practitioners and civil society members to make scientific contributions, policy analyses and prescriptions, and practical experiences which will facilitate the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments.

For more information contact:
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E-mail neville@irfd.org
Web http://www.irfd.org

Tropical millennium bugs

Nouha, Australia, 23–26 June 2000

Presented by the Australian Centre for International Health and Nutrition (ACITHN) and the Australasian College of Tropical Medicine (ACTM), this Australasian tropical health conference will focus on topics such as travel medicine, advances in tropical medicine, Arbovirus/Zoonoses, drugs/vaccines development, indigenous health, toxins, ectoparasite infections, head lice, and clinical tropical medicine.

For more information contact:
Jacqui Upcroft

Papua New Guinea food and nutrition 2000

Lae, Papua New Guinea, 26–29 June 2000

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Food insecurity exists when people lack access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food and are therefore not consuming enough for an active and healthy life. The National Agricultural Research Institute and Department of Agriculture and Livestock are sponsoring a major conference on food and nutrition in Papua New Guinea with the theme of food security in Papua New Guinea. There is a call for papers. Papers may relate to particular events, such as the 1997 drought; to broader questions on food security and human nutrition; to production aspects of particular foods; or to problems that threaten production of particular foods.

For more information contact:

Food and Nutrition 2000
Conference (Attention: Ms Sharry! Ivahupa)
National Agricultural Research Institute
PO Box 4415 Lae
Papua New Guinea
Tel +675 4721751
Fax +675 4722242
E-mail nar@dztec.com.pg

Whose millennium?

Melbourne, Australia, 3–5 July 2000

Andre Gunder Frank will be one of several internationally renowned keynote speakers at the Asian Studies Association of Australia’s (ASAA) 13th biennial conference. The Association aims to
contribute towards an understanding of Asia in Australia by promoting Asian studies and the exchange of information on Asia through publications, conferences and seminars. ASAA 2000 will facilitate contacts between scholars, teachers, researchers, professionals or anyone in the field of Asian studies and provide forums for discussion. Panels will include globalisation and Southeast Asia, Asia in transition, race and predicament of identity, gender, health and sexuality in Asia, and international relations in Southeast Asia.

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Web http://www.asaa2000.unimelb.edu.au

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**Global education in Australia**

*Adelaide, Australia, 20–21 July 2000*

A national conference has been planned to bring together all people interested in the future directions of global education in Australia. It is envisaged that this conference will highlight current best practice and formulate a national network of global educators.

For more information contact:
Freya Desbiolles
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1st Floor, 220 Victoria Square
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Australia
Tel +61 8 8221 6744
Fax +61 8 8221 6755
E-mail gecsa@global-education.asn.au
Web http://www.global-education.asn.au

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**Sustainable rural livelihoods: Building communities, protecting resources, fostering human development**

*Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 30 July – 5 August 2000*

The task of this conference will be to identify tools and templates from theory and experience that will enable communities and rural populations to adapt to an increasingly urban, resource-hungry 21st century. NGOs and other intermediaries play important roles in resource management and community development that are not well understood. Not to be neglected are the ways that training and instruction in the rural social sciences can enhance the ability of technical and human service professionals to function in the rural environment. Outside the classroom, new models of outreach and extension communication must be found.

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Web http://www.ag.auburn.edu/irsa/

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Transnational communities in the Asia-Pacific region: Comparative perspectives

*Singapore, 7–8 August 2000*

The main aim of this conference is to examine the dynamics involved in the construction of various transnational communities against the rich and diverse socio-cultural canvas of the Asia-Pacific. Specific themes include transnationalism in the Asia-Pacific region as a history of diasporic encounters; transnational communities, citizenship and national identities; the impact of the Asian economic crisis on transnational communities; gendered character of transnational community formation; and media and transnational communications.

For more information contact:
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Fax +65 779 1428
E-mail casikme@nus.edu.sg

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Easter Island and Pacific scientific and cultural advances

*Kamuela, Hawaii, 7–12 August 2000*

The committee of Pacific 2000 and the Easter Island Foundation are organising this fifth international conference on Easter Island and the Pacific. The following sessions are being scheduled: Polynesian prehistory, settlement patterns and landscape studies, Lapita studies, Pacific colonisation and exploration, paleo-borany of Oceania, Polynesian languages and literature, arts of the Pacific, and conservation problems in the Pacific.

For more information contact:
Pacific 2000
Easter Island Foundation
PO Box 6774
Los Osos, CA 93412
USA
E-mail rapanui@compuserve.com
Oriental and Asian studies in the era of globalisation: Heritage and modernity – opportunities and challenges

Montreal, Canada, 27 August – 1 September 2000

The 36th meeting of the International Congress of Asian and North African Studies will focus on research on the contemporary as well as the ancient and traditional Orient seen in the light of the various disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. There is a call for papers.

For more information contact:
ICANAS 2000 Secretariat
Bureau des congrès
Université de Montreal
PO Box 6128, Station Downtown
Montréal, Québec H3C 3J7
Canada
Tel +1 514 343 6492
Fax +1 514 343 6544
E-mail congrès@bcoc.umontreal.ca
Web http://www.bcoc.umontreal.ca

Challenges for public health at the dawn of the 21st century

Beijing, People's Republic of China, 2–6 September 2000

The World Federation of Public Health Association (WFPHA) is an international NGO that represents the broad field of public health. The ninth international congress of the WFPHA aims to examine issues such as the globalisation of health, poverty and social justice, health and development, health and human rights and reproductive health.

For more information contact:
WFPHA Secretariat
c/o American Public Health Association
800 I Street
Washington, DC 20001-3710 USA
Tel +1 202 777 2487
Fax +1 202 777 2534

Environment and development

Stockholm, Sweden, 6–8 September 2000

This conference, sponsored by the Beijer International Institute for Ecological Economics, will focus on the relationship between environmental change and economic development. There is a call for papers.

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Gender equality in higher education

Zurich, Switzerland, 12–15 September 2000

Gender relations and gender balance in higher education in Europe are changing. In many countries, women already represent the majority of students at universities and some colleges of applied sciences. Why, then, are women still a minority on the higher education career ladder? Why do only a very few women climb the career ladder at all? This conference aims to confront the results of women's and gender research with the experiences gained in science policy and gender equality political practice. Themes to be covered include strategies of gender equality in higher education; academic careers: networking and mentoring for women at national and international levels; and innovative projects for gender equality through women's and gender studies.

For more information contact:
2nd European Conference on GE in HE
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Small islands in the third millennium: Sharing solutions to common problems

Isle of Skye, Scotland, 16–20 October 2000

Even though there are conditions which separate small islands from each other the 'island factor' is present – circumstances which are unique to islands compared to the mainland (or large islands). Some characteristics of the 'island factor' are remoteness and insularity, peripherality to centres of decision making, a limited range of natural resources, specialisation of economies, small markets, narrow skills base, poor infrastructure, vulnerability to natural disasters, degree of exposure to forces outside of their control such as climate change and sea level rise, environmental fragility and often unique but threatened biological diversity. Organised by Habitat Scotland, an independent environmental research charity, the general theme of this conference is how different islands, through their government agencies, university departments, NGOs, voluntary bodies, community groups, or simply as individual islanders, have overcome these common problems.
Poverty, prosperity, progress
Wellington, New Zealand, 17–19 November 2000

Poverty is difficult to define, measure, monitor and alleviate, especially across and within different social groups and cultures. This conference provides an opportunity for participants to analyse and reflect upon the relationships between poverty and development in New Zealand and overseas, and to share experiences and lessons from addressing poverty, prosperity and progress in different places. The conference seeks to link local and global wisdom and practice to foster new visions and approaches towards poverty alleviation and self-determination. Specifically, by learning from successful alternatives we hope to challenge mainstream conceptions of prosperity and progress and allow for more creative synergies between government, business, NGOs and civil society.

For more information contact:
DEVNET Conference
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Tel +64 4 472 9545
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Social transformation in the Asia Pacific region
Wollongong, Australia, 4–6 December 2000

The conference will be jointly convened by the Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS) and the UNESCO-MOST (Management of Social Transformations) Program. Globalisation and regional integration are changing the ways people live, work and relate to each other all over the world. Societies and communities often have no choice about participating in global networks, but the character of their participation is shaped by specific social, cultural, economic and political conditions. This complex multi-level process of mediation between the global and the local is the focus of a new interdisciplinary field of research: social transformation studies. Unlike traditional development studies, this new approach does not take the Western model as the aspired goal, but rather sees social transformation as an open-ended process affecting all parts of the world. There is a call for papers.

For more information contact:
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Tel +61 2 42 213 780
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12th national health promotion conference
Melbourne, Australia, 29 October – 1 November 2000

The Australian Health Promotion Association 2000 Conference aims to encourage the health promotion field to be more radically effective in improving health and well-being, and in reducing inequalities in the 21st century. It will stimulate this through thinking critically about both our past and our future, a combination of: imaging likely futures for Australia and its region and about the crucial need to improve health; and sharing and reflecting upon the accumulated wisdom from the last 25 years.

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March 2000
Book reviews

Questioning empowerment: Working with women in Honduras

Empowering communities: A casebook from West Sudan
Peter Strachan with Chris Peters 1997, Oxfam, Oxford, ISBN 0 855 98358 2, 96pp., £7.95

Missionaries and mandarins: Feminist engagement with development institutions

In recent years, the 'development literature' has come to cover a wide range of issues and has been aimed at all levels of audience. From this perspective, these three books represent an excellent cross-section of the subjects which fall under the development heading. In doing so, they provide 'something for everyone' whether they work in the government or non government sectors, academia or in the field.

In her informative and timely book Questioning empowerment, based on her recent PhD, Rowlands combines a sophisticated analysis of several key theoretical understandings of power with real life case studies taken from her own work with women's organisations in Honduras. Far from presenting an academic dissertation about the various modus operandi of empowerment, Rowlands offers accessible and thought-provoking insights into the complexities of power which underpin all efforts to engender empowerment. Going beyond what are now considered fairly old fashioned Marxist versions of power which differentiate between social groups and individuals who either do or do not have power, she introduces her reader to more modern and, arguably, more relevant understandings of power which derive from the French philosopher Michel Foucault. In order to make such new understandings relevant, Rowlands then applies these new concepts to two of her Honduras based case studies, illustrating the differences and convergences between each. In doing so she also invites readers to share her detailed and multi-focused analysis of how 'empowerment' by and among women can be achieved. While cautioning against inappropriate generalisations, Rowlands is instructive, particularly at the conceptual level, in encouraging a more sophisticated understanding of what the empowerment of individuals and social groups may entail. Questioning empowerment will be of great value to all those interested in better understanding the complexities of development work and the multiple levels of action that empowerment can demand.

Empowering communities, by Oxfam fieldworker Peter Strachan together with Oxfam writer/researcher Chris Peters, constitutes an altogether different approach from that taken by Rowlands. It is a highly accessible account of the aftermath of the 1984–85 famine in western Sudan. It could be said that this book takes up where Bob Geldof left off. Empowering communities documents the work of aid agency Oxfam over a seven-year time span. Beginning from the rather unique position of possession of a more-than-sufficient funding base (due to the work of Geldof and others), the Kebkabiya Project started with the establishment of a number of seed banks, controlled initially by Oxfam, throughout regional villages. Later stages of the project, which involved animal traction, contour farming and animal health and drugs, became community 'owned' and managed. One key aspect of this project is almost certainly the proactive effort on behalf of Oxfam and the communities to involve the village...
An introduction to metal mining: Economic and environmental issues in the South Pacific


Much of the popular, academic and policy debate around mining in the South Pacific is complicated by a poor understanding of many of the technical and economic aspects of mining operations. To many, all large scale mines are the same. Yet the social, economic and environmental impacts of a particular mine, or of the industry in a particular country, are in large part determined by technical and economic criteria. Whether a mine is open-cut or underground, the ore cut-off grade and the stripping ratio, for example, are technical and economic matters which rarely enter public debate but which are central to the impacts of mining on communities, regions and governments. The strength of this slim volume is that the author spells out in a clear and concise manner the main concepts and terms used in both the mining and the economic side of the industry. Basic distinctions such as between inferred and measured reserves, waste rock and tailings, and royalties and other forms of taxation are clearly explained, and the implications of these differences for the effects of mineral projects are well set out. For these reasons this book will provide an excellent introductory volume on the industry for social scientists and students who wish to understand the geological, technical and economic complexities of the mining industry.

The book begins with a brief chapter on 'geological and economic facts', outlining the extremely low proportion of total metal abundance that may be mined, the heterogeneity of mineral deposits themselves, and the definition of cut-off grade which distinguishes economic ore from waste rock. The stages and associated techniques used in mineral exploration are discussed in the following chapter, along with the somewhat vague industry standards used to define reserves and resources at various levels and the expensive, risky and often lengthy nature of mineral exploration (in one example used, just two per cent of mineral properties examined by one firm over 40 years resulted in the development of a mine). This chapter concludes with a note on policy issues for mineral exploration.

Chapter 4, which occupies two-thirds of the text, looks in depth at issues surrounding mineral extraction and processing. Terminology and the major distinctions between different forms of mine operations, along with their advantages and disadvantages, form an introduction to a section on the risks and costs of mining, lower than exploration for investors, but still higher than for any other industrial activity. Equal, if not larger, risks are borne by third parties—environmental, social and even economic risks. The discussion of the types of environmental impacts that mining creates is clear and comprehensive. The benefits from mineral extraction are dealt with, unsurprisingly, in economic terms, drawing largely on Fijian examples. This section highlights the capital-intensive nature of the industry and the often poor linkages from mining into other sectors of the economy. The policy issues discussed include the costs and benefits of different royalty and taxation regimes (royalties on production volume or value will usually increase the cut-off grade and hence increase the waste rock–ore ratio), the promotion of employment and local business opportunities, the need for an integrated regulatory environment, and basic tools for controlling the environmental impact of mines. The conclusion provides a good discussion of two key issues related to mining and the environment: the 'resource curse thesis' (which the author argues is not inevitable), and mining and sustainable development.

The book is generally well written and makes good use of diagrams and maps (although the latter are fairly basic), making it accessible to a wide readership. The photographic appendix works less well.

Points of concern with the volume are few. They arise in areas outside the author's specialist areas. One is the discussion of 'fair compensation' for landowners. Here the author could have usefully drawn on a wider range of work on compensation in the mining industry in Papua New Guinea: the recent volume by Toft (1997), for example. The example of the 'clearly excessive claim' by landowners downstream of Ok Tedi uses a figure of 74 litigants (claiming US$40.5 million each), which misses the point somewhat. In fact, the suit was eventually on behalf of more than 30,000 people in the region downstream, but the primary aim was to stop the disposal of tailings into the river system, rather than the sum itself.

Likewise, the discussion of mining and sustainability is couched very much in
terms of economic sustainability - complete with formulas - yet, at both local and national levels, the social, political and administrative aspects of sustainable development are at least as critical. At the Porgera mine, for example, both the mining company and the landowners are now focused on establishing social infrastructure, administrative structures and economic resources for a sustainable, post-mine region. These weaknesses are no doubt a reflection of the author's background in geology and economics, but he could have tapped into some of the broader literature on the social and cultural impacts of mining in the region.

These omissions do not significantly detract from the book's obvious strengths, and the volume is highly recommended as an introduction for students and social scientists who seek a fuller understanding of the modern mining industry, which continues to affect the development paths and prospects of many nations in the region.

Reference

Glenn Banks, School of Geography and Oceanography University College, Australian Defence Force Academy

The A to Z of world development

The world guide 1999/2000: A view from the South

The editors of New Internationalist magazine undertook to produce 'a reference work with attitude' and have succeeded with this editorialised dictionary/encyclopaedia which reflects the focus, politics and ideologies of the New Internationalist collective. One is supposed to find in this collection descriptors of events, people and concepts that 'avoid the orthodox and bogus notions of objectivity which pervade mainstream journalism'. Aimed at the secondary school library bookshelf, this collection covers an incredibly diverse range of topics, picking up some of the more oblique development issues. From military dictator Idi Amin to disaffected tribal groups such as the Yanomai, concepts ranging from agribusiness to Zionism and Xenotransplantation, and issues encompassing everything from the Aswan High Dam and the development implications of large scale hydroelectricity to the wildlife trade, there is something in this reader for everyone. Development profession acronyms are well covered, from ABEDA (the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa) to UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency), as are diseases and medical issues affecting the developing world, from the poisonous aflatoxins, which apparently persist in 80 per cent of raw foods in Sudan, to the signs and symptoms of preventable water-borne diseases from which the World Health Organization estimates 25,000 people die each day.

As a reference tool, this work certainly has potential use beyond the secondary school, perhaps for bureaucrats or students new to the development 'profession'. The entries are brief, necessitated by the breadth of topics the A to Z attempts to cover. Certainly, the Internet could provide more detail for almost all of the topics, but for definitional purposes the Internet is not usually the best source. However, links to relevant Internet sites would be a fantastic feature in any future edition. Although described in more detail than in the A to Z, the two pages devoted to each of these issues would provide a neat overview for secondary school children, to whom the guide is targeted.

As in the A to Z, some events are editorialised whilst others are presented either without comment or almost as 'positives'. For example, two rural development projects funded by the World Bank in Paraguay describe the subsequent restriction of movement on the 'indians', but discuss the effect of the (massively destructive) Iaipu hydroelectric plant in terms of the increased economic ties it brought about between Paraguay and Brazil - despite the building of Iaipu having been described in other texts as possibly the largest fraud in the history of capitalism.

It is interesting that some entries are quite overtly editorialised according to the New Internationalist ideology, while others are presented quite matter-of-factly. For example, a critique is provided on the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (The World Bank Group), but the Asian Development Bank escapes absolutely unscathed, and therefore perhaps to the uninitiated the A to Z may give the impression that the non-critiqued organisations or people are, in relative terms at least, 'okay'.

For NGO libraries and programmes such as the Community Aid Abroad Global Education programme, which introduces development to primary and secondary school children, the A to Z will be a welcome addition to the shelves.

Coordinated by the Third World Institute in Uruguay, The world guide 1999/2000 also reflects New Internationalist ideology in the profile and history of 217 countries. Indeed, a review in the Melbourne Age newspaper suggests that, to ensure your children receive a balanced view of the world, you should direct them not only to the US-published Encyclopedia Britannica, but also to this reference.

As the millennium edition, the guide also reviews the major trends of the past century in an overview section of primary global development issues, from debt to deregulation, and from social models to speculation. Although described in more detail than in the A to Z, the two pages devoted to each of these issues would provide a neat overview for secondary school children, to whom The guide is targeted.

As in the A to Z, some events are editorialised whilst others are presented either without comment or almost as 'positives'. For example, two rural development projects funded by the World Bank in Paraguay describe the subsequent restriction of movement on the 'indians', but discuss the effect of the (massively destructive) Iaipu hydroelectric plant in terms of the increased economic ties it brought about between Paraguay and Brazil - despite the building of Iaipu having been described in other texts as possibly the largest fraud in the history of capitalism.
This resource is unique, however, because it is produced by a team from the developing world; it is not just about the developing world. Additionally, it is a remarkable synthesis of a range of publications and issues: labour conditions, human rights records, environmental issues, and military expenditure, for example, in addition to the more usual development indicators and statistics. The text draws on resources from Amnesty International reports to world debt tables and is updated from a vast range of sources; consequently, the text suffers from editorial inconsistency.

As for all hard-copy reference books, the ability to stay relevant is of course limited compared with Internet based resources. However, thankfully at least for Spanish speakers, reflecting for once a focus on the peoples of the South, *The guide* is available on the net in Spanish, together with an updating service – Guia de la Semana. *The guide* is also available on CD-ROM.

The editors state that their objective was to avoid the biases often found in Western reference books, for example, commencing history at the time of the European arrivals and ignoring the unique roles of women. *The guide* is therefore a great companion to the home atlas for your school children.

*Misha Coleman, ACT Community Aid Abroad Coordinating Committee*
Feminist visions of development: Gender analysis and policy
In the wake of the Fourth World Conference on Women, this volume brings together gender and development scholars who interrogate the last 20 years of work in this area. The book discusses key issues including gender and the environment, education, population, reproductive rights, industrialisation, macroeconomic policy and poverty. It re-examines previous structural analysis and opens the way for further research in the field.

Gender and power in affluent Asia
This study analyses the relationships between gender and power that have accompanied the rise of Asian affluence. The book prompts a series of questions about the links between gender, modernity and globalisation in the region; and pursues two major themes: gender relations are central to the making of the middle classes and modernity in the region; and representations of gender occupy a central place in the contests about meanings and identities accompanying these processes. This book demonstrates the central importance of gender in the modernising and globalising of Asia.

Women in parliament: Beyond numbers
Today, 11 per cent of the more than 40,000 parliamentarians worldwide are women. The Nordic countries, with their long tradition of gender equality, top the league with 36 per cent female representation in parliament, compared to 11 per cent in Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, 15 per cent in the Americas, almost ten per cent in Asia and three per cent in Arab countries. This book focuses on the political impact women have made through parliaments. It analyses the strategies they have used and the procedures they have changed.

Integrating gender: Translating commitments into policy and practice
This book identifies and develops the connections between women's politics and public policies and practices. The author focuses on political activism and strategies that have influenced great change in state and international policies. She covers NGOs, governments and international agencies. Staudt examines the realities of social change from all perspectives, reminding us that all institutions, within and outside of government, are sources of and sites for struggle.

New books

Women's information services and networks: A global source book
This book begins with an introduction on the impact of communication technologies on global networking, including the importance of electronic services for women's networks, followed by chapters covering Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe and Southern Africa. It provides an extensive directory of information centres for and about women plus a bibliography and list of electronic resources.

Policy, politics and gender: Women gaining ground
This book identifies and develops the connections between women's politics and public policies and practices. The author focuses on political activism and strategies that have influenced great change in state and international policies. She covers NGOs, governments and international agencies. Staudt examines the realities of social change from all perspectives, reminding us that all institutions, within and outside of government, are sources of and sites for struggle.

Always hungry, never greedy: Food and the expression of gender in a Melanesian society
For the Wamira people of Papua New Guinea, concepts of food and hunger are cultural constructs. They objectify emotions, balance gender relations, communicate rivalries, and control ambivalent desires.
Rising from the ashes: Development strategies in times of disaster

Mary B. Anderson and Peter J. Woodrow

Drawing on case histories of emergency relief programmes that have successfully promoted development, the authors offer guidelines for fashioning assistance programmes designed to counter the effects of both natural and human-caused disasters. Arguing that relief efforts must support and enhance existing capacities, they present an analytical framework for assessing the characteristics and needs of afflicted communities.

Recovery from armed conflict in developing countries: An economic and political analysis


This work examines ways in which developing countries may achieve economic, political and social reconstruction in the wake of armed conflict. International researchers discuss such issues as women and children in the recovery process, refugees and the role of aid, the re-integration of ex-combatants and community-led recovery. Case studies focus on Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, South Africa and Sri Lanka.

Dams and disease: Ecological design and health impacts of large dams, canals and irrigation systems

W. Jobin 1999, E & FN Spon, ISBN 0 419 22360 6, xiv + 580pp., £60

This book describes ways to avoid the negative impacts of large dams, canals and irrigation systems that currently abound in developing countries. It includes 35 case studies from 25 countries. The author proposes that the World Health Organization should join the World Bank in promoting healthy development of tropical water resources.

The challenge of institutional change: A practical guide for development consultants


Institutional development, an approach that is especially important because it can help to build strong civil societies, requires new skills of the advisor. This book offers practical guidance for the national or expatriate consultant in meeting the dilemmas of institutional development and facilitating effective implementation.

The composting toilet system book


Composting toilet systems and other ecological wastewater management methods are emerging as viable and cost-saving alternatives to wastewater disposal systems worldwide. This book describes more than 40 systems, both manufactured and site-built, and their sources; gives information on compatible toilet stools and installing micro-flush toilets; outlines tips on choosing, planning, installing and maintaining a composting toilet system; and details regulations and advice about getting the system approved.

Impact assessment for development agencies: Learning to value change


Impact assessment is a major concern to all working in development, both funding and delivery agencies. This book considers the process of impact assessment and shows how and why it needs to be integrated into all stages of development programmes, from planning to evaluation. It argues that impact assessment should refer not only to immediate outputs or effects but also to any lasting or significant changes that occur.

Information management for development organisations

Mike Powell 1999, Oxfam, ISBN 0 855 98410 4, 160pp., £8.95

Written for NGO and community organisations, this book aims to encourage critical thinking about the kinds of information they and their partners need and use. It discusses how to access, manage and communicate information in effective and equitable ways.

Development and management experiences in value-based conflict

Deborah Eade (ed.) 2000, Oxfam, ISBN 0 855 98429 5, 196pp., £12.95

Development is not a question of project-based interventions, or of quantifiable inputs and outputs, but a complex process of negotiation over meanings, values and social goals within the sphere of public action. This collection of papers from the journal Development in Practice, draws on the Open University's work in the field of development management. It includes accounts by academics and development managers that range from civil society organisations in Brazil to NGO workers in Egypt, government departments in Tanzania and Poland, donor agencies in Bangladesh, and black feminist activists in the UK.

Development and social action

Oxfam 1999, Oxfam, ISBN 0 855 98415 5, 196pp., £8.95

Civil society organisations (including NGOs) are playing an increasing role in promoting policy change on behalf of poor people. The challenge is to move from protest and opposition to constructive engagement with the state and the private sector. This collection of papers from the journal Development in Practice draws on experiences of social action in areas such as governance and the state of law, North–South NGO relations, and the use of development theatre in working for social and political change.
Stakeholders: Government–NGO partnerships for international development


This study from the OECD Development Centre, presents a review of the relationships between OECD member countries and NGOs from these countries. It focuses on the increased concentration on measuring outcomes at the expense of targeting real needs, and on the trend towards contracts with donor governments which are replacing the older practice of matching grants.

State of the world 1999


This book presents a clear and concise view of our changing world. The 16th edition of this annual review looks at the sweeping changes of the last 100 years and the challenges we face in the next century to build a sustainable economy that reuses and recycles materials, is powered by renewable energy sources and has a stable population.

Indonesia’s fires and haze: The cost of catastrophe


In the middle of 1997, forest fires burning in Indonesia began to spread thick clouds of smoke and haze to neighbouring countries. By the time the fires were finally extinguished in 1998, some eight million hectares of land had burned while millions of people suffered the effects of air pollution. The fires were one of the century’s worst environmental disasters. This book assesses the damage caused by the fires and haze in monetary terms. It looks at the damage suffered by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Fertile ground: The impacts of participatory watershed management


Twenty-three case studies present a complex picture of the problems, achievements and continuing challenges faced by conservation professionals and farmers around the world. They provide evidence of the importance of local people’s involvement in natural resource planning and management.

Property rights and economic development: Land and natural resources in Southeast Asia and Oceania


This book provides a critical analysis of the assumption that the formalisation and standardisation of property rights through state legislation has a positive impact on economic development. It is based on anthropological case studies of land and natural resource rights in Southeast Asia and Oceania. The case studies also suggest that state reforms of property rights do not necessarily eliminate the conditions of legal pluralism, but rather add new legal structures to an already complex constellation of rights and duties.

Government, communities and non-governmental organizations in social sector delivery: Collective action in rural drinking water supply


This book is addressed broadly to those concerned with development and specifically to institutional economists concerned with collective action issues and the role of NGOs in fostering development and collective action. The book develops a conceptual framework within which to view the role of governments, markets and NGOs in a comparative economic context. It also provides empirical evidence to highlight various points identified in the conceptual framework.

DAC scoping study of donor poverty reduction policies and practices

Aidan Cox (ed.) 1999, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development with Overseas Development Institute, ISBN 0 850 09437 X, 156pp., £7.50

This study assesses the performance of development agencies with respect to their goals and operational objectives; conceptual framework and strategies for poverty reduction; approach to pro-poor policy coherence; management systems for mainstreaming poverty reduction; skills and incentive structures; approach to gender mainstreaming; and efforts to develop partnerships and coordinate at country level. The study suggests important opportunities to strengthen policy and practice on poverty reduction.

The crisis of poverty and debt in the Third World


Written by the founders of Jubilee 2000, this book provides the background to the campaign. It describes the plight of 52 of the poorest nations in the world and contains critiques of the economic bases of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund approaches to debt management in developing economies. The book puts forward the case for a Jubilee pattern of debt remission associated with the year 2000. Such a pattern involves a radical one-off forgiveness for past inert debts and, with preconditions, will produce a new beginning in proper financial discipline.
Reflections on violence in Melanesia
Sinclair Dinnen and Allison Ley (eds)

Activists, commentators and academics from throughout Melanesia reflect on aspects of violence in a region so often depicted as the tropical paradise of tourist brochures. The background is the dislocation caused by the impact of globalisation on cultures where plantation economies have already been grafted onto traditional, pre-colonial societies. Chapter by chapter, the authors document the diverse meanings of violence in the region, making plain the huge variation in its nature and level across different Melanesian contexts. Acknowledging the considerable levels of violence experienced in some parts of Melanesia, the authors show the complexity of its phenomena and the folly of propounding simple explanations and simple solutions for a remarkably diverse group of island societies. They challenge the thoughtless applicability of Western law and learning to the Melanesian world, noting that indigenous patterns of restorative justice, retribution and reconciliation continue to operate in conjunction with more modern forms.

Managing development: Understanding inter-organizational relationships

Managing development provides insights into the partnership approach to development. It demonstrates how changing institutional imperatives, terminology and political agendas have resulted in new types of relationships emerging between groups and organisations in the development process. The book examines these opportunities, both by analysing the underlying concepts and agendas, and by thinking explicitly about what these mean for management practice. The contributors suggest ways in which inter-organisational relationships can be worked out in practice, and provide examples and case studies which explore ways of managing real-life complexities in development management.

Foreign experts and unsustainable development: Transferring Israeli technology to Zambia, Nigeria and Nepal
Moshe Schwartz and A. Paul Harc 2000, Ashgate, ISBN 0 754 61282 1, 218 pp., £37.50

The main problems revealed in this book reflect how strongly changes in global politics and economics impact on small-scale local development projects. Using in-depth case studies from Nigeria, Nepal and Zambia, this book examines Israeli-assisted agricultural development projects and addresses the key issues and problems involved with such collaborative projects, where foreign experts introduce new technologies to less developed countries' rural communities.
Reports and monographs

Participation of women in political life: An assessment of developments in national parliaments, political parties, government and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, five years after the Fourth World Conference on Women

Inter-Parliamentary Union 2000

From 4 to 9 June 2000, the United Nations General Assembly will hold a Special Session to take stock of national, regional and international follow-up to the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995. This study analyses answers received from parliaments and political parties to the surveys undertaken since October 1998 on the follow-up to Beijing. This study will be brought to the attention of the United Nations as a contribution to the Special Session of the General Assembly. It is available in English and French free of charge from the IPU Secretariat.

Women in politics: World bibliography

Inter-Parliamentary Union 1999

This bilingual bibliography (English and French) has been designed as a reference tool for persons carrying out research on or wishing to know about the literature existing around the world on the theme of women in politics. It is constantly up-dated and so far covers some 650 titles presented in four different sections: international, regional, country-by-country (so far 100 countries), and thematic, and also contains a section on those Internet sites which provide information on the basic characteristics of the world’s national parliaments: the name of the parliament, its constituent Houses, their President/ Speaker and the Secretary General/Clerk. It also lists each parliament’s address, telecommunications data and, whenever available, the name and address of a specific contact in the parliament to facilitate communication and exchange of information. It provides information on every national parliament in existence in the world at the time of publication. The Directory usually appears in April and can be obtained free of charge from the IPU Secretariat.

For more information on the above three publications contact:
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E-mail postbox@mail.ipu.org
Web http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm

Navigating gender: A framework and a tool for participatory development

Arja Vainio-Mattila 1999, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Department for International Development Cooperation, Helsinki

This is a manual for applying the often theoretical understanding of gender issues into practical development work. Gender analysis is used to examine the impacts of development on both women and men, and is used as the basic tool to develop policy and action towards gender equality. The manual can be used both as an individual study guide, or as a basis for discussion in groups. It is aimed at project planners/ implementers, participants in development interventions, policy developers and researchers. Available online.

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Mainstreaming gender and development in the World Bank: Progress and recommendations


This report presents the main findings of a completed study undertaken for the Social Development Family in the World Bank’s Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development (ESSD) Network. The primary objective of the review is to identify the current rationale, language, and underlying policy approach to gender and development adopted by the World Bank; to evaluate the extent to which these are Bank-wide, that is, shared across the institution; and to make recommendations concerning needs specifically identified by ESSD. The issues raised go beyond social development and are of relevance to all concerned with mainstreaming gender and development in World Bank lending and non-lending operations at the policy, programme and project levels.

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how this is influenced by their different responsibilities in the home and in society and how this in turn affects their ability to engage in public life. Too little has been done to plan and manage cities with women. A fresh perspective is needed, which recognises women as integral players in urban governance and which facilitates their participation in urban partnerships. In developing this perspective, the paper highlights some critical gender issues in government responsibility and civic engagement in urban areas. It explores the challenges facing women working to promote women’s gender interests in urban practice from different institutional locations.

Available online:

Gendered governance: An agenda for change

Governance is presumed to be gender-neutral. But, in fact, the discourse, procedures, structures and functions of governance remain heavily skewed in favour of men in general, and certain groups of men in particular. This unequal sharing of power leads to an unequal sharing of resources—time, incomes, property—between men and women. The consequences of this maldistribution are evident in the disproportionately high number of women who are illiterate and living in extreme poverty. Redressing these inequalities requires a gendered analysis of the processes and structures of governance. Such an analysis suggests that the family (or household) and the community are sites of governance, in that they are spaces where people interact and in which power is exercised. Furthermore, these sites exist interdependently with the three tiers of government—local, national and international—as is evident from the way in which gender relations mediate and are mediated by regulations that span the public and private domains.

Available online:

Panchayat Raj: Women changing governance

Women are changing governance in India. They are being elected to local councils in unprecedented numbers as a result of amendments to the constitution which mandate the reservation of seats for women in local government. In India, this system is called the Panchayat Raj Institutions system (PRI). The women whom PRI has brought into politics are now governing, be it in one village, or a larger area such as 100 villages or a district. Some evidence of women’s impact can be drawn from the experiences of PRI in the two states which have experienced a full five-year term of this new administrative and political regime (1987–92). This monograph discusses the evidence from the state of Karnataka, where elections under PRI (mandating 25 per cent seat reservation for women) were held in 1987 and 14,000 women were elected.

Available online:

Rights of women: A guide to the most important United Nations treaties on women’s human rights

Written in simple, non-legal language, this publication provides a timely and valuable contribution to Cairo+5 and Beijing+5. A comprehensive review of women’s human

March 2000
rights as defined by the most important United Nations human rights conventions along with effective strategies for using international law, the monograph provides both the theory and tools for championing women's human rights.

Available from:
Women, Ink
777 UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017
USA
E-mail wink@womenink.org
Web http://womenink.org

Gender and development: A training manual
Centre for Development and Population Activities, US$15

This outlines a comprehensive five-day, nine-session workshop for trainers of programme managers and development workers in the private and public sectors. Field-tested in Africa, the curriculum is designed to enable development workers to create gender-responsive institutions, policies, programmes and projects. It examines gender influences in the participants' own lives, cultural reinforcement of gender roles and relationships and how these factors affect the development process.

Gender equity: Concepts and tools for development
Centre for Development and Population Activities, US$10

This handbook helps development professionals integrate gender perspectives into projects, programmes and institutions. It provides an overview of the rapidly changing field of gender and development, introduces gender analysis as a tool to strengthen development activities, suggests ways to incorporate gender and summarises the most complete agenda on gender equity, the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The above two publications are available from:

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Communications and development: A practical guide

This is a practical guide to the use of communications media in development programmes. Issues covered include why communication is important; implementing development communication programmes; and the use of specific media (including drama, theatre and video), television, radio, ICTs (including internet, email), advocacy, public relations and networks. It includes recommendations on participatory approaches and on evaluation of communication programmes.

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The state of the world's children 2000

Throughout the developing world, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and deep poverty are reversing gains made over the past century and endangering the survival, development and protection of millions of children. At the same time, advances in science and technology have helped push polio to the brink of eradication and drastically reduced deaths caused by measles. Smallpox has been extinguished and immunisation against basic childhood diseases offers hope to hundreds of millions of children. This report is a call to leaders in industrialised and developing countries alike to reaffirm their promises for children made in the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. It is a call for vision and leadership within families and communities, and for all people to realise a shared vision of children and women freed from poverty, discrimination, violence and disease.


This new publication formulates an appropriate and widely accepted policy and strategy statement on infant feeding in emergencies for humanitarian agencies. The document was the result of several meetings in the UK. Participants included individuals and representatives from a wide range of agencies concerned to promote positive and appropriate infant feeding practices in emergencies. The document contains original material, which tries to address some of the problems and knowledge gaps around this area. Some examples include a fact sheet (ready for distribution in emergency contexts), a triage approach to decision making (includes a flow chart of feeding options), and a piece on monitoring and evaluation (including indicators which can be used in determining progress/impact of an intervention).

Available from:
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Legal developments in the Pacific Island region: Proceedings of the 1999 conference

Tess Newton (ed.) 2000, held at the University of the South Pacific, Emalus Campus, Port Vila, 6-7 September 1999

This volume carries the papers from the second 'Legal developments in the Pacific Island region' conference. The papers cover topics such as committal proceedings and women's access to justice, continuing/professional legal education in the region, and the role of the ombudsman as mediator.

Available from:
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The future of food aid: A policy review

Edward Clay, Nita Pillai and Charlotte Benso 1998, Overseas Development Institute, ISBN 0 850 03323 3, 70pp., £7.50

Aid-funded shipments of food to developing countries should be phased out except in cases of dire emergency, according to this study prepared for Britain's Department for International Development. The results of the US$2 billion a year spent shipping food to poor countries are mostly 'unimpressive'. The report defends the use of food aid in real emergencies, but two-thirds of all food aid is either sold on local markets, or used to support food-for-work programmes or supplementary feeding of children. Providing jobs and feeding children are both worthwhile, but sending food aid is not the best way to do it. The UN's World Food Program delivers development food aid to over 60 countries but could now be obliged to close its operations in large countries like China, India and Pakistan. The ODI study argues that it should instead become an emergency and relief logistics agency.

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Web http://www. one world.org/odi/


This edition encapsulates the highlights of work which has been undertaken by member governments supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat. It covers issues such as gender in the Commonwealth, human resource development in small developing island states, telecommunications and information technology, finance, trade and investment, education and training, agriculture and food production, industrial, regional and infrastructural development, energy resources, transport, health care and tourism. Also includes details (names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers) of each Commonwealth country's Ministers.

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103
Newsletters and journals

Inside Indonesia
Published quarterly by the Indonesia Resources Information Program, this magazine provides a comprehensive coverage of news, opinion, background information, critical analysis and debate on social, political, cultural and environmental issues in contemporary Indonesia. Since its first issue in 1983, the magazine has gained a reputation for publishing incisive, accurate articles backgrounding current issues or breaking new stories. Articles include issues such as independence movements in East Timor, Aceh, West Papua, the economic and political crisis, worker struggles, human rights abuse, ecotourism, gender, Islam as well as fiction, book reviews and website information.

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Fax +61 3 9419 4774
E-mail admin@insideindonesia.org
Web http://www.insideindonesia.org

Gender Beat
Gender Beat is a periodic e-mail bulletin about UNDP and UN-system gender goings-on, people, events, and resources. It provides news about UNDP’s work for gender equality: programmes, projects, workshops, meetings at country, regional and global levels; other events with implications for gender; and information about gender activities, organisations and partnerships from outside the UN-system. It also includes a section on gender resources: new publications; training courses; organisations; electronic discussion lists and websites.

For more information contact:
Gender in Development Program
United Nations Development Programme
E-mail gidp@undp.org

UNIFEM Currents
The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) produces a monthly electronic bulletin on UNIFEM activities. It provides up-to-date information briefs on UNIFEM initiatives, successes, events, projects and activities worldwide.

For more information contact:
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Fax +1 212 906 6705
E-mail jessica.humphreys@undp.org
Web http://www.unifem.undp.org

Development and Gender in Brief
This bulletin aims to raise gender awareness among policy makers and practitioners. The bulletin provides succinct, state-of-the-art updates on specific themes. Previous issues covered include environmental projects, poverty reduction strategies, conflict, emergency responses, and institutionalising gender. The bulletin is mailed to 2,500 interested individuals and organisations mainly in developing countries.

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E-mail bridge@ids.ac.uk
Web http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/index.html

Gender Matters Quarterly
This is a publication of the USAID Office of Women in Development’s Gender Project, which discusses current issues in the field of gender and development.

For more information contact:
USAID Office of Women in Development
GenderReach Project
1250 I Street NW, Suite 1115
Washington, DC 20005
USA

Gender, Technology and Development
This international journal explores the linkages between changing gender relations and technological development. The diverse perspectives of the Asian region provide the main focus but dialogues along East-West and North-South lines are also important. The objective of the journal is to facilitate the recognition, promotion and coordination of opinions concerning the extended and shifting boundaries of meaning in gender, feminism, equality, technology and science for non-Western societies and cultures. The journal attempts to link the activities of women and men to institutions or governments, on the basis of technology, social relations and management. It develops the theory and practice of gender and technological development and defines policy and programmes in their political, economic and social context.

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Gender and Development
Gender and Development focuses specifically on gender and development issues internationally, and explores the connections between gender and development initiatives and feminist perspectives. Launched in 1993, the journal offers articles drawing on Oxfam’s experience as an NGO working in the gender field. Grounded in experience of gender-sensitive development, Gender and Development offers a forum for debate, bringing together theory, practice, and insights for the future.
Journal of Gender Studies

The *Journal of Gender Studies* is an interdisciplinary journal which publishes articles relating to gender from a feminist perspective covering a wide range of subject areas including the social and natural sciences, arts and popular culture. Reviews of books and details of forthcoming conferences are also included. The journal seeks articles from international sources and aims to take account of a diversity of cultural backgrounds and differences in sexual orientation. It encourages contributions which focus on the experiences of both women and men and welcomes articles, written from a feminist perspective, relating to femininity and masculinity and to the social constructions of relationships between men and women.

Journal of Human Development

As an alternative to the traditional focus on economic growth as an end in itself, human development provides a different framework of analysis, focusing on issues of empowerment, participation, equity, sustainability and human rights. This new journal aims to publish original and challenging work that analyses the concept, measurement and/or practice of human development at global, national and local levels. It will provide a forum for the open exchange of ideas among a broad spectrum of development practitioners, policy makers and academics and will aim to stimulate further research and development of concepts and measurement tools for human development. Human development is becoming a 'school of thought' and the journal will act as a conduit for members and critics of this 'school'.

Asian Ethnicity

At the end of the twentieth century, ethnic issues have assumed an importance in many parts of the world presenting major problems with, in some cases, the potential to tear recognised states apart, and are now recognised as among the most important sources of concern and contention in the world as a whole. *Asian Ethnicity* aims to provide a cross-disciplinary, international venue for the publication of well-researched articles about ethnic groups and ethnic relations in the half of the world where questions of ethnicity now loom largest. *Asian Ethnicity* will be broad-ranging and include ethnology, anthropology, political science, history, economics, human and economic geography, demography, language, literature, the arts, religious studies, and international relations. The first issue of the journal is due out in Spring (northern hemisphere) 2000.

For more information on the above four journals contact:

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SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia

SOJOURN is an interdisciplinary journal devoted to the study of social issues in Southeast Asia. Empirical and theoretical research articles are published with a view to promoting and disseminating scholarship in and on the region. Areas of special concern are ethnicity, religion, urbanisation, migration and development. Contents include articles, research notes and comments, notices on conferences, workshops, and seminars, and book reviews, as well as occasional English translations of pivotal research published in Southeast Asian languages.

For more information contact:

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Land Use Policy

This is an international and interdisciplinary journal concerned with the social, economic, political, legal, physical and planning aspects of urban and rural land use. It provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and information from the diverse range of disciplines and interest groups which must be combined to formulate effective land use policies. The journal examines issues in geography, agriculture, forestry, irrigation, environmental conservation, housing, urban development and transport in both developed and developing countries through major refereed articles and shorter viewpoint pieces. Book reviews, conference reports, publications and calendar listings keep readers up to date.

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Field Exchange

*Field Exchange* is published by the Emergency Nutrition Network. This Network aims to improve the effectiveness of emergency food and nutrition interventions by providing a forum for the exchange of field level experiences between staff working in the food and nutrition sector in emergencies. *Field Exchange* primarily contains short articles written by field personnel working in the food and nutrition sector of emergency response. The newsletter also contains other sections devoted to summaries of research and evaluation findings related to food and nutritional aspects of emergencies and resulting interventions; correspondence and dialogue on topical issues and events; listings of conferences, meetings, courses and training workshops relevant to those working in the food and nutrition sector in emergencies; and an overview of current emergencies which have had food and nutritional consequences. Available online.

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March 2000
Working papers

World Bank Policy Research Report on Gender and Development

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Centre for Development and Population Activities

Women in Management

8 May – 9 June 2000

The Centre for Development and Population Activities holds an annual workshop in Washington, DC on women in management. The aim of this workshop is to increase the woman manager’s capacity to create positive change at the personal, organisational and community levels. The workshop is aimed at women working in government, non governmental, and community-based organisations who design, manage, and evaluate gender-equitable development programmes.

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IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre

Gender in Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes

5–23 June 2000

The objectives of the course are to elaborate on the importance of gender in water and sanitation programmes; to upgrade knowledge concerning key aspects of gender; to improve skills to effectively develop, implement and manage a gender strategy in water supply and sanitation programmes; and to develop a plan for the inclusion or improvement of gender in the participant’s own work situation.

For more information contact:
IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre
Attn.: Training Section
PO Box 2869

East-West Center

Summer Seminar on Population

1 June – 1 July 2000

The East–West Center, Population and Health Studies seminar will run four workshops and seminar-wide substantive and social activities as part of its 31st summer seminar. The seminar provides an opportunity for professionals in population-related fields to share and expand their knowledge of population and its relation to social, cultural, and economic change. The four workshops will deal with analysing adolescent risk-taking behaviour; health planning for ageing populations; communicating population and health research to policy makers; and economic analysis of reproductive health programmes. Each workshop will focus on Asia and the Pacific.

For more information contact:
31st Summer Seminar on Population
East–West Center, Population and Health Studies
1601 East-West Road
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Tel +1 808 944 7410
Fax +1 808 944 7490
E-mail sumsem@ewc.hawaii.edu

Australian Centre for International and Tropical Health and Nutrition

Healthy Cities and Healthy Islands

13–29 June 2000

The purpose of this course is to provide training on the principles and practice of
identification of health problems, risk assessment and modern techniques in the planning, management and evaluation programmes for promoting the concept of healthy cities and islands in the tropics. Sessions will include an introduction to the philosophy of healthy cities and islands, health promotion, community participation, monitoring and evaluation, risk assessment and health planning. The course is mainly intended for those working in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, particularly environmental health officers, health promotion officers, health planners and administrators, district health officers and Master of Public Health students.

For more information contact:

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Center for Development Research
International Doctoral Studies Program for Development Research

The Center for Development Research is a multi-facultative and interdisciplinary institution with three departments: Economics and Technological Change, Ecology and Resource Management, and Political and Cultural Change. The doctoral programme covers development economics, natural resource management, and development policy. Topics include quantitative analysis of development policy, international organisations/governance, public expenditure and social services, labour and employment, development and culture, trade and development, and macroeconomics and finance.

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Web http://www.zef.de

ANUTECH Development International

Gender Analysis and Planning
8–19 May 2000

Gender relations are key social organisational structures throughout the developed and developing world. The different gender roles and needs of women and men affect the household, community and national interests. Why do these differences exist? How do gender differences impact on development projects? How can gender equity be promoted at all levels? The course aims to address these issues and to enable participants to anticipate the positive and negative impacts of development interventions on men and women. Participants will learn skills in how to appraise, design and redesign projects to overcome possible negative gender impacts and to create opportunities for the greater empowerment of women.

Geographic Information Systems for Development Planning and Resource Decisions
13 June – 14 July 2000

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are used increasingly by a wide range of planners and resource managers to store, interpret, analyse and map the biological, physical and socioeconomic data required for sound management decisions. This course enables participants to develop an understanding of the principles and potential of GIS as a tool for development planning and resource management; develop hands-on skills in the development and use of GIS for storing, retrieving and analysing complex sets of resource and environmental data; and gain skills in the application of GIS in real world decisions for resource management and planning by using examples and data sets from a range of sector case studies.

For further information contact:

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Fax +61 2 6249 5875
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Tufts University School of Nutrition Science and Policy and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy

Master of Arts in Humanitarian Assistance

This new course is aimed at mid-career professionals with significant field experience in the areas of famine, conflicts and complex emergencies. The MA consists of two semesters of academic work. Students are expected to complete the following core courses: humanitarian aid in complex emergencies, nutrition in complex emergencies, independent seminar in humanitarianism, and one course selected from the other core courses offered by the programme. Students are required to write a Master's thesis as part of the second semester requirement. Typically the thesis applies theory and analytical skills learned in the programme to the professional's previous experience.

For further information contact:
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Fax +1 617 627 3428
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March 2000
**Curtin University of Technology**

**Master of International Health**

The new Master of International Health is a one-year, three semester programme designed to meet the professional needs of candidates from diverse backgrounds who have a special interest in health in the global context. Study options include primary health care, health planning, management, health promotion, research and programme evaluation. The programme is informed by policies and directions of international organisations such as the World Health Organization, and government and non-government agencies involved in health programmes, research and evaluation. Also offered by distance education.

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Tel +61 8 9266 2606
Fax +61 8 9266 2608
E-mail nferroni@cc.curtin.edu.au

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**Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education**

**Advanced Diploma and Diploma of Social Science**

The three-stage advanced diploma programme consists of a suite of five separate but interrelated courses within the broad field of social sciences. All the courses aim to support students to develop their capacity to contribute to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to exercise their rights and contest their violation. The courses also prepare students for work in service agencies and other organisations that support and facilitate personal and social change towards emancipation, empowerment and better health.

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**Diploma of Interpreting**

This 15-week course is suitable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who wish to learn the interpreting skills needed for working in areas such as health, police and courts, welfare, government, community affairs, land claims, education, and tourism and hospitality. Prospective students should be fluent in English and an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language and have good literacy skills. From year to year, this course may only be offered in selected languages.

For more details contact:

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
Post Office
Batchelor NT 0845
Australia
Tel +61 8 8939 7111
Fax +61 8 8939 7100

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**Asia Pacific Community Development Courses**

Victoria University offers BA, Dip.Ed and MA community development courses for people interested in working, or already working, in community development in Asia and the Pacific, or in development organizations active in the region.

- Vic Uni’s new Dip. Ed/Masters Postgraduate Program in Asia Pacific studies (Community Development) is open to anyone with tertiary degree level qualifications in any discipline.
- Vic Uni’s undergraduate BA (Community Development) - Asia Pacific stream course is open to anyone with Australia year 12 equivalent or demonstrated community work experience (paid or voluntary).

The courses offer both theoretical and practical knowledge and skills oriented to Asia Pacific development contexts, and are particularly relevant for intending or practising development workers, rural community workers, community educators, women’s services workers, environmental workers, urban community workers, youth workers, NGO project officers, and development volunteers.

**PLACES ARE STILL AVAILABLE IN THE YEAR 2000 INTAKES FOR BOTH COURSES.**

For further information and application procedures contact:

Associate Professor Michael Hamel-Green (Course Coordinator),
Arts Faculty, St Albans Campus, Victoria University, PO Box 74428, Melbourne MCMC, 8001, Australia. Phone: 61-3-93852139 Mobile: 0408594569
Email: michael.hamel-green@vu.edu.au Details on the above courses are also available on the Social Inquiry and Community Studies Department website within the Victoria University website: http://www.vu.edu.au

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110 Development Bulletin 51
Organisational profiles

**Institute on Governance (IOG)**

The IOG was founded in 1990 to promote effective governance. From the IOG’s perspective, governance comprises the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how power is exercised, how citizens are given a voice, and how decisions are made on issues of public concern. Their current activities fall within four broad themes: citizen participation, Aboriginal governance, building policy capacity, and accountability and performance measurement. In addition, they have two newly emerging theme areas: information and communications technology and governance, and youth and governance.

For more information contact:

Institute on Governance  
122 Clarence St.  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada, KIN 5P6  
Tel +1 613 562 0090  
Fax +1 613 562 0907  
E-mail info@iog.ca  
Web http://www.iog.ca/

**International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)**

Created in 1995 by 14 countries, International IDEA promotes and advances sustainable democracy and improves and consolidates electoral processes worldwide. It provides a forum for discussion and action among individuals and organisations involved in democracy promotion. Global in ownership and score, and independent of national interests, International IDEA is the only international organisation with this unique mandate.

For more information contact:

International IDEA  
Stromsberg, S-103 34  
Stockholm  
Sweden  
Tel +46 8 698 3700  
Fax +46 8 26 24 22  
E-mail info@idea.int  
Web http://www.int-idea.se/

**BRIDGE**

BRIDGE (briefings on development and gender) is an information and analysis service specialising in gender and development issues. BRIDGE’s objective is to assist development professionals and organisations to integrate gender concerns into their work. BRIDGE provides tailor-made briefings on gender issues on request. BRIDGE briefings present state of the art research findings, review current policy debates, synthesise best practice and evaluate strategies for translating gender policies into practice.

For more information contact:

Hazel Reeve, BRIDGE Manager  
Institute of Development Studies  
University of Sussex  
Brighton BN1 9RE  
United Kingdom  
Tel +44 1273 678 243  
Fax +44 1273 691 647/621 202  
E-mail bridge@ids.ac.uk  
Web http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge/index.html

**Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)**

WIEGO is a worldwide coalition of institutions and individuals concerned with improving statistics, research, programmes, and policies in support of women in the informal sector of the economy. WIEGO grew out of earlier collaborations between the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), Harvard University, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). WIEGO is shaped by the synergy between three different types of organisations: grassroots, research and academic, and international development. WIEGO’s programme activities are
designed to produce concrete benefits for women in informal employment and targeted at specific policies, policy debates, or policy making bodies. WIEGO’s main goal is to formulate and promote policies that will directly benefit women in informal employment.

For more information contact:
WIEGO Secretariat
John F. Kennedy School of Government
79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
USA
Tel +1 617 495 0797
Fax +1 617 496 9466
E-mail info@wiego.org
Web http://www.wiego.org/index.html

Amhara Women’s Development Association (AWDA)

AWDA is an indigenous NGO established in August 1995, operating in the Amhara Region, East Gojam and South Gonder Administrative Zones, Ethiopia. Its main activities include looking for ways and means of alleviating the Amhara women’s social and economic problems, and assisting the rural women in the Amhara Region to attain their strategic needs by getting equal access to the economic, political and social spheres. AWDA provides credit to women in North Showa, and grinding mills for South Gonder and East Gojam women.

For more information contact:
Ato Asmaru Berihun, Chairperson
PO Box 15051
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia
Tel +251 1 154 492

Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA)

CEDPA is a women-focused, non-profit, international organisation founded in 1975. CEDPA’s mission is to empower women at all levels of society to be full partners in development. CEDPA’s strategies for empowerment include capacity building of development institutions and networks, mobilising women’s participation at the policy level, linking reproductive health services and women’s empowerment, and making youth an integral part of the development agenda. Working with partner NGOs and networks in more than 37 countries, CEDPA designs, implements, monitors, and evaluates projects in family planning and reproductive health, family life education, women’s participation in empowerment, youth services, and international advocacy for women and girls. Field offices are located in Egypt, India, Mali, Nepal and Nigeria.

For more information contact:
Centre for Development and Population Activities
1400 16th Street NW, Suite 100
Washington, DC 20036
USA
Tel +1 202 667 1142
Fax +1 202 332 4496
E-mail email@cedpa.org
Web http://www.cedpa.org/

International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA)

IWDA is an Australian based NGO which undertakes projects in partnership with women from around the world, giving priority to working with women who suffer poverty and oppression. IWDA aims to address not only practical everyday needs of women and their communities, but also supports women’s human rights in countries throughout Asia, the Pacific, Africa and Central America. IWDA’s projects aim to end violence against women, promote women’s participation in decision making, ensure livelihoods and income, educate and train women in a range of skills, and improve women’s health.

For more information contact:
International Women’s Development Agency
PO Box 64
Flinders Lane VIC 8009
Australia
Tel +61 3 9650 5574
Fax +61 3 9654 9877
E-mail iwda@iwda.org.au

International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC)

The IWTC is an international NGO set up in response to demands for information and resources from many of the more than 8,000 women who participated in the United Nations International Women’s Year (IWY) World Conference and the non governmental IWY Tribune in Mexico City, 1975. For the last 20 years, IWTC has provided information, education, communication, networking, technical assistance and training resources for women worldwide. Today, IWTC continues as a networking and information clearinghouse for some 25,000 women and women’s groups in Africa, Asia–Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East.

For more information contact:
International Women’s Tribune Centre
777 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
USA
Tel +1 212 687 8633
Fax +1 212 681 2704
E-mail iwtc@iwtc.org
Web http://www.wiego.org/index.html

Women and International Development Program at Michigan State University (MSU–WID)

MSU–WID publishes papers, sponsors speaker, and provides resources relating to women and international development. While the primary focus of the programme is the South, the programme takes into account that international development is a global process and that the Third World is a set of relationships rather than simply a place. A central goal is thus to foster recognition that international development brings costs as well as benefits, and that these often are not shared equally by women and men of different nations, races, classes and ethnicities. MSU–WID also promotes the generation and application of knowledge on women in comparative perspective through its monograph series. In addition, it publishes The Forum, a series which features short reports that describe
research projects and development programmes, and the WID Bulletin, a resource guide which includes information on recent publications, scholarships, conferences, employment opportunities, and other news of interest. These and other resources are included on the WID website.

For more information contact:
Women and International Development Program
Michigan State University
202 Center for International Programs
East Lansing, MI 48824-1035
USA
Tel +1 517 353 5040
Fax +1 517 432 4845
E-mail WID@msu.edu
Web http://www.isp.msu.edu/wid/

Pacific Women’s Resource Bureau (PWRB)
The PWRB is a programme located within the Social Resources Division at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. It sits alongside Community, Health, Statistics, Demography, Rural Energy, Culture and the Pacific Youth Resource Bureau. The programme aims to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the Pacific Island countries and territories by supporting national actions towards gender equity and the advancement of women.

For more information contact:
Pacific Women’s Resource Bureau
Secretariat of the Pacific Community
BP D5, 98840 Noumea Cedex
New Caledonia
Tel +687 262 000
Fax +687 263 818
E-mail SelmaV@spc.org.nc
Web http://www.spc.org.nc/women/index.html

UNIFEM East and South East Asia
UNIFEM East and South East Asia works with governments, NGOs, community and other organisations, as well as individuals, in East and Southeast Asia, to promote gender equality between women and men and advance the status of women. In particular, it focuses on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action through the political and economic empowerment of women. Accurate data on gender issues are essential for informed policy making. It provides technical advice and helps clarify the different experiences of women and men in areas such as employment, earnings, the value of unpaid work, and violence against women.

For more information contact:
UNIFEM East and Southeast Asia Office
UN Building 12th Floor
Rajdamnen Avenue
Bangkok 10200
Thailand
Tel +66 2 280 3810
Fax +66 2 280 6030
E-mail unifem-bkk@mozart.inet.co.th
Web http://www.unifem-eseasia.org/

Global Development Network (GDN)
The goal of the GDN is to support and link research and policy institutes involved in the field of development, and whose work is predicated on the notion that ideas matter. The initiative, still in its early phase, has proceeded on two fronts: knowledge generation and knowledge sharing. Achieving these goals involves strengthening the capacity of research and policy institutions to undertake high-quality, policy-relevant research and to move research results into the policy debates, at both national and global levels. The GDN expects to offer research and policy institutes and existing networks around the world workshops, networking opportunities, research grant competitions, training opportunities, and other services to improve research skills, business practices, and improved connectivity with sources of knowledge.

For more information contact:
GDN Secretariat
The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20433
USA
Tel +1 202 458 9891

Australia Pacific Community Network (APCN)
APCN works to build people-to-people links with communities in the Pacific Islands region, including Aotearoa/New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and the smaller Pacific Islands of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia. It is the Australian affiliate of PIANGO (Pacific Islands Association of Non Government Organisations), and uses this network to assist Australian NGOs, large or small, in any field of endeavour to access and disseminate information on a range of topics relating to the Pacific Islands. APCN aims to promote wider understanding within the Australian community of Australia’s role and responsibilities in the Pacific, to break down divisive stereotypes and encourage analysis of Australian policies within the Pacific region, including areas such as trade, diplomacy, tourism, environment, gender equity, human rights, religion, security, sports, culture and the arts, communication, immigration and development assistance.

For more information contact:
Jan Clohessy
Centre for Asia-Pacific Studies
Victoria University of Technology
PO Box 14428 MCMC
Melbourne VIC 3001
Tel +61 3 9248 1200
Fax +61 3 9248 1202
E-mail caps@vut.edu.au

DAWN
DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) is a network of women scholars and activists from the economic South who are working for development alternatives that are equitable, gender-just and sustainable. It aims to influence debates on global development issues by offering holistic analyses from a South feminist perspective that is both

March 2000
grounded in women's experience and inspired by women's collective strategies and visions. DAWN's current themes include political economy of globalisation, sexual and reproductive rights, sustainable livelihoods and political restructuring and social transformation.

For more information contact:
Claire Slatter, General coordinator
Tel +679 313 900 Ext 2183/2184
Fax +679 314 770
E-mail dawn@is.com.fj
Web http://www.dawn.org.fj

SRISTI
The Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions (SRISTI) is an NGO which was set up in 1993 to strengthen the capacity of grassroots inventors, innovators and ecopreneurs engaged in conserving biodiversity and developing eco-friendly solutions to local problems. This is being achieved by protecting the intellectual property rights of grassroots innovators, and generating models for recognising, respecting and rewarding creativity; experimenting in order to add value to their knowledge; and developing entrepreneurial abilities in order to generate returns from this knowledge.

For more information contact:
SRISTI
c/o- Prof. Anil K. Gupta
Indian Institute of Management
Ahmedabad 380015
Gujarat
India
Tel +91 79 407 241

IDP International Projects
As a part of IDP Education Australia, IDP International Projects develop and manage a diverse range of project and training initiatives throughout the world. It provides training, technical assistance, human resource development and institutional strengthening projects in fields such as health, the environment, finance and education to governments and international bodies, such as AusAID, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. Institutional and organisational links established through these projects help to broaden the application of Australia's educational and intellectual resources and facilitate international exchanges. IDP International Projects aims to provide professional management, staff and facilities to infrastructure projects in all parts of the world, bringing together the best consultants in their fields to provide the best possible team to implement and complete important and worthwhile development projects.

For more information contact:
IDP Education Australia Limited
GPO Box 2006
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia
Tel +61 2 6285 8369
Fax +61 2 6232 5284

Australian Legal Resources International
Australian Legal Resources International (ALRI) is an Australian non-profit NGO, dedicated to the promotion of good governance, democracy, human rights and the rule of law in developing countries. Since its establishment in 1993, it has provided volunteer consulting assistance in the Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East. The ALRI draws on Australian legal expertise with considerable experience in legal and judicial institutional and policy reform. Its focus during 1999 was responding to the Indonesian crisis. The technical assistance provided to date has concentrated broadly on legal drafting assistance, judicial training, training of judicial officers, revision of laws, human rights training, and promotion of legal literacy. All such programmes are implemented within a broader objective of institutional strengthening and capacity building.

For more information contact:
Australian Legal Resources International
PO Box A975
Sydney NSW 1235
Australia
Tel +61 2 9368 2958
Fax +61 2 9368 2902
E-mail alri@alri.org.au
Occupational stereotyping: People’s perceptions of age, gender, and caste in India

Does gender, age, or caste affect how people perceive different types of work in rural India? Non-agricultural work tends to be dominated by men, especially salaried work in rural areas. Research presented at the annual meeting of the UK Development Studies Association on Andhra Pradesh looks at the gender stereotyping of jobs and asks why it is that women work mostly in agriculture and are excluded from non-agricultural jobs. Crucially, what are people’s perceptions of such gender differentiation? Caste and class are strongly reflected in the data tracking people’s attitudes.

Available online:
Web http://www.id21.org/static/6bwo1.htm

Democratising gender: How economic and political change affect gender relations

How can institutions be changed such that women need not lose out on processes of democratic consolidation and economic reform? This challenge forms the focus of an ongoing comparative research project, based at the University of Sheffield, examining gender and simultaneous economic and political reform in Argentina, Chile and Peru. The research shows that though women’s groups have often contributed to the democratic transition, they have trouble consolidating gains in the emerging or re-emerging civilian regimes that result. This in turn has implications for the gendered impact of economic restructuring. This study analyses which institutional changes are needed to help guarantee the representation of women’s interests and their participation in democratic politics and economic reform.

Available online:
Web http://ntl.ids.ac.uk/cgi-bin/dbscgi.exe

Materials

Women in development

Analyses the impact of gender roles on the lives of women in Vietnam, Micronesia, and the Solomon Islands, discussing health, education and the influence of women on environmental issues.

Available from:
Insight Media
2162 Broadway
New York, NY 10024-0621
USA
Tel +1 212 721 6316
E-mail cs@insight-media.com
Web http://www.insight-media.com

Technical training for women: Towards technical empowerment

Twelve technical training modules which teach women technological capability related to engines, stoves, building and energy. Designed by TOOLConsult’s gender expert, these manuals use a range of innovative ‘technological empowerment’ approaches and exercises to help bridge the gap that often exists between women and technology. The modules were developed for women in semi urban and rural regions who are confronted with new technologies such as motorised grain mills or oil presses, diesel pumps and engines, improved cooking stoves and possibly electricity, and who have little or no prior technical training.

Available from:
Mrs. Saskia Everts, TOOLConsult
Sarphatistraat 650, 1018 AV
Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel +31 20 626 4409
Fax +31 20 421 1202
E-mail saskia.everts@tool.nl

Women’s Resources International (1972–present)

This CD-ROM holds over 170,000 records. It includes Women’s Studies Database from the University of Toronto; Women’s Studies Abstracts; POPLINE subset on Women; Women’s Studies Librarian from the University of Wisconsin covering New Books on Women and Feminism, Women’s Audovisuals in English (WAVE), Women Race and Ethnicity: a Bibliography, and The History of Women and Science, Health and Technology. It is updated on a semi-annual basis.

POPLINE on CD-ROM (1827–present)

This is the world’s largest population database from the Population Information Program of the Johns Hopkins University, School of Public Health and the National Library of Medicine. It contains over 251,000 citations and abstracts from published and unpublished sources. Includes population, family planning, AIDS, fertility, population laws and policies, health care instruction, demographics, sexually transmitted diseases, maternal and child health and environmental impact.

Info-ASEAN & Pacific Rim

This CD-ROM contains over 115,000 records from over 500 leading business publications. It presents data on emerging trends, economic markets and new technologies. It offers full text records, abstracts, tables, facts, figures and key events of companies, industries and markets based in the 30 countries of Southeast Asia.

The above three CD-ROMS are available from:

Margaret Crampton
National Inquiry Services Centre
22 Somerset St
PO Box 377
Grahamstown 6140
South Africa
Tel +27 46 622 9698
Fax +27 46 622 9550
E-mail NISC@ru.ac.za
Web http://www.nisc.com
Pacific women's directory: A guide to women's organisations agencies and skilled women in the Pacific Islands

Pacific Women's Resource Bureau 1997, Secretariat of the Pacific Community

This updated, second edition of the Pacific women's directory contains extra sections on skilled women and major resource sources for women's development in the Pacific Island region. The information compiled in this issue came directly from responses to three questionnaires that were distributed to national women's focal points, individuals and bilateral and multilateral donor agencies active in providing resources for women's development in the Pacific Island region.

Available online:
Web http://www.spc.org.nc/women/index.html

Carving out: Development in the Pacific (Wan solowaura developmen long Pasifik)

This is a 13-part radio series available in English and Tok Pisin throughout the Pacific on Radio Australia's short wave service. Pacific Islanders speak out about cultural identity, health, education and the state of their environment, voicing their practical solutions to the big questions affecting the Pacific today. The English series can be heard in the Pacific at 6.30am and 5.30 pm Suva time each Saturday from 11 March, or on Sundays at 12.30pm or Mondays at 9.30 am on (kHz): 5995* 6080* 7240* 9580* 9660* 11880* 15240* 15515* 17580* 17715* 17795* 21725* 21740. The Tok Pisin series can be heard in PNG and the Pacific at 8pm PNG time each Wednesday and Friday from 8 March on (kHz): 5995* 6020* 9710. In Australia, the series can be heard on Radio National at 5pm each Saturday from 11 March.

Winds of change

During 1998 and 1999, Asia's unfolding dramas reverberated around the globe. Filmmakers from Indonesia, Vietnam and Hong Kong have been documenting the winds of historic change sweeping through their world. Working unobtrusively within their own communities, they are now able to tell the world their own stories with the kind of intimacy and depth that comes from being on the inside. Each episode is made up of three untitled short stories.

For more information contact:
Film Australia Ltd
PO Box 46
Lindfield NSW 2070
Australia
Tel +61 2 9413 8777
Fax +61 2 9413 8671
E-mail mday@filmaust.com.au
The Development Studies Electronic Forum

This Forum was established by the Australian National University (ANU) to provide a world-wide communications vehicle and a central electronic archive for anyone working on, or interested in, the study of social and economic development, with a particular focus on Third World countries. It was established on the 7 July 1994 on the joint initiative of the Coombs Computing Unit, Research Schools of Social Sciences & Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, and The Australian Development Studies Network, National Centre for Development Studies, RSPAS, ANU.

How to join

To join (subscribe to) the forum send e-mail

to: majordomo@coombs.anu.edu.au
message: subscribe Development-Studies-L your e-mail address
[eg: subscribe Development-Studies-L xyz@abacus.abc.edu.au]

To leave (unsubscribe) the forum send e-mail

to: majordomo@coombs.anu.edu.au
message: unsubscribe Development-Studies-L your e-mail address
[eg: unsubscribe Development-Studies-L xyz@abacus.abc.edu.au]

It will be helpful for all members of the Forum to provide a brief introductory note, as their first communication with the Forum: who you are, your institution or affiliation, your general and specific interests in development studies research. Such note should be labelled in the subject line: 'M.Y. Surname biographical details' (eg, A.B. Charles biographical details). Most email systems permit the appending of a signature block to a message; please use one if possible.

Participants are free to join and leave the Forum at any time. English is the preferred language of communication of this Forum.

Contributions

To contribute, you must have subscribed and been approved as a member of the list of contributors. Approval to join the Forum is a 'pro forma' operation, but subscription does permit some basic control of the contents of submissions by the list owner. Any submission to the forum is immediately broadcast to all subscribed members, and a copy automatically archived.

Anyone, whether a registered member or not, can electronically view and retrieve the communications to the forum using a database 'ANU-Development-Studies-L' available through the standard WAIS software and through the ANU's COOMBSQUEST Social Sciences and Humanities Information Facility gopher running on the coombs.anu.edu.au as well as on the cheops.anu.edu.au machines.

To post your contribution to the forum send e-mail

to: Development-Studies-L@coombs.anu.edu.au
message: [the body of your contribution comes here]

If you are reporting findings or research results, treat the text as if it were a short note/abstract to professional journal. Bibliographic information is always welcome and such contributions, if submitted, will be archived on in the Coombspapers Social Sciences Research Data Bank at ANU available by ftp/gopher/www access on the coombs.anu.edu.au system.

If in doubt how to interact with any of the coombs.anu.edu.au lists, end a message 'help' to: majordomo@coombs.anu.edu.au
Electronic fora

Women’s Human Rights Net

This website was launched in November 1999 by an international coalition of women’s human rights organisations. It is part of a project that aims to strengthen advocacy for women’s human rights through the effective utilisation of information and communication technologies. This site is organised into the following categories: issues (highlighting facts, relevant web links, and the gender dimension of 20 human rights issues); advocacy/strategies; news and urgent action alerts; UN/regional systems; capacity building; and a Beijing +5 section. WhrNET’s partners in every world region constantly update the site with contributions. Other features include forums (online discussions of relevant issues); resources (a human rights resource centre); and events (upcoming governmental, UN and NGO women’s human rights events).

Web http://www.whrnet.org

WomenAction 2000

A global NGO electronic network for Beijing + 5, this website was launched in November 1999. Its project goal is to develop a communications network and information-sharing strategy that allows women in every world region to participate in and impact on the 5 year review of the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. WomenAction 2000 has also undertaken the facilitation of the WomenWatch online working group on Women and Media.

Web http://www.womenaction.org

Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the world organisation of parliaments of sovereign states. Its website carries plenty of up-to-date information on gender issues including the numbers of women in parliaments around the world, together with regional comparisons.

Web http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm

Engendering governance and leadership

One of UNIFEM’s areas of immediate concern involves engendering governance and leadership that will increase women’s participation in decision making processes that shape their lives. The UNIFEM website has a section on governance and leadership. It outlines its 1997 projects, tools for action and gives details of the women’s peace petition.


devolution-gender

Aims to bridge divides between gender and development researchers, practitioners and individuals at dispersed locations. Forum for discussion, debate, information exchange, e-mail conferences, job ads etc.

As a managed list, it also offers summaries of relevant key debates elsewhere.

To join development-gender, send a message to:
mailbase@mailbase.ac.uk

Type the following in the first line of your message:
join development-gender firstname lastname (type your own personal names instead of firstname and lastname)

UNRISD News

This online newsletter features sections on essential matter, new books, discussion papers, reports and conferences relating to the work of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD).

Web http://www.unrisd.org/english/publ.htm

Partners and Food in Emergency and Development Aid (PFEDA)

The PFEDA website provides two interactive databases on the different actors involved in emergency and development aid, and the foods allocated as part of this work. PARTNERS is a database on the institutions, private/public companies and individuals involved in the emergency and development sector. Over 2,200 addresses and a classification of the organisations/individuals work are currently available on this database. FOOD is a database on the food products used in emergency and development projects as well as detailed features about the food, for example, origin (processor, supplier, broker), commercial name and generic name, category of product, detailed formulation, nutritional constituents, microbiological characteristics, technological characteristics, commercial or logistical specifications.

Web http://www.univ-lille1.fr/pfeda/
ACFOA briefing

The Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) is an association of more than 90 Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in international aid and development. The common purpose of ACFOA member agencies is to promote sustainable human development so that all people can fulfil their needs, enjoy a full range of human rights and live in dignity.

In 1998 Australian NGOs channelled more than $290 million into humanitarian assistance and development projects around the world. This included over $258.5 million in cash and at least $32 million in goods and volunteer support contributed by the Australian community. Approximately $90 million was also channelled through the NGOs by the Australian Government through AusAID.

ACFOA 2000–2001 budget submission summary

Ensuring a more equitable share of the cost and benefits of globalisation is arguably the most important development challenge facing the world as we move into the new century. If the widening gap between rich and poor is to be arrested, it will require the political will of nation-states and civil society to intervene and regulate those underlying international financial and economic fundamentals which are currently shaping the widening inequality gap.

Australia has already demonstrated leadership in strategic areas. One example of this was its intervention into the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans conditionality for Indonesia at the height of the financial crisis in Asia. Politically, Australia has also shown strong leadership in peace building and human rights in conflicts such as those in Bougainville and, more recently, in East Timor.

In the lead-up to the 2000–2001 federal budget, ACFOA is campaigning for the government to maintain funding at the same real levels across the aid programme, with increased funding primarily for East Timor and Africa, and small increases for other areas with significant levels of poverty.

ACFOA recommends that the upcoming budget consolidate the 1999–2000 volume of official development assistance (ODA) at 0.28 per cent, that is, to maintain actual 0.03 per cent of GNP increase over the 1999–2000 budgeted level. This requires an increase of $170 million which, allowing for growth, inflation and tax reform effects, amounts to an additional $245 million on the 1999–2000 budgeted figure. Humanitarian needs should be given priority, including basic education and primary health care.

ACFOA repeats its call for an overall level of ODA of 0.40 per cent of GNP by 2005 in line with progress towards the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for OECD countries. This would require an ongoing increase of 0.03 per cent each year until 2005 and would bring Australia into line with the OECD unweighted average.

An integrated approach

Aid can only contribute effectively to poverty eradication when it is integrated into a comprehensive approach to development that addresses a whole range of policies, including fair trade, effective debt relief, peace building and human rights initiatives.

The crisis in East Timor and events in Indonesia highlight the need for Australia to embrace a more integrated policy approach to development cooperation, trade and security and defence. ACFOA is seeking the government's support for a range of policy measures that include reform of the international financial architecture, debt relief, trade reform measures, development cooperation, peace building and human rights initiatives.

It is in Australia's national interest to help develop a more prosperous global economy, where our exports are expanded, our national security preserved and our passion for human rights and fair play promoted. It will be in our particular strategic...
interest to ensure that developing countries are able to take advantage of the benefits of globalisation.

Civil society: Backbone of a more equal global order

It is vital that civil society and governments from developing countries have a strong voice in forums and mechanisms dealing with trade, debt reduction and the reform of multilateral financial institutions. Development assistance should attempt to strengthen, rather than weaken local structures and ownership. In addition to helping governments, it should also build the capacity of civil society, including local NGOs, trade unions, the media and people's organisations.

Demands on developing countries to participate in a new trade round and reforms to increase the poverty reduction effectiveness of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the IMF should be accompanied by very significant increases in development assistance flows, capacity building programmes and technical assistance from OECD countries, including deep cuts to the debt of the most heavily indebted nations.

Of particular importance is ensuring that the citizens of very poor debt burdened countries have a strong voice in decision making, including how freed funds are used to reduce poverty. This requires that funds be allocated for developing the capacity of civil society groups to effectively scrutinise and participate in government, IMF and World Bank decisions.

Meaningful debt relief

Many poverty-stricken countries carry such high levels of debt that human development is undermined. Basic human rights, including access to health care, education, clean water and adequate food, are denied as scarce resources are diverted from socially essential programmes to repay debt. The current unsustainable levels of debt held by many countries represent one of the world's most fundamental and ongoing human rights violations.

Effective debt relief presents a major opportunity for highly indebted poor countries (HIPC's), already suffering from declines in aid, trade and technology transfers. It is crucial that debt relief is linked to social development and poverty alleviation, otherwise public support for it will dissipate. ACFOA supports calls for the definitive cancellation of the unpayable debt for HIPCs, and notes that the government has acknowledged that the impact of this action would be negligible on the Australian Government and economy.

Further improving our aid: Ten steps in the right direction

In addition to these broad policy directions, ACFOA advocates the following ten key areas in which Australia can improve the quality and quantity of our aid programme.

1. A greater role for Australian NGOs

A greater role is justified for NGOs in the Australian aid programme, especially in growth areas of the budget such as East Timor and Indonesia.

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and AusAID emphasise the importance of participation, consultation and capacity building for civil society as prerequisites for effective aid delivery to the poor and recognise that these are all activities in which the NGO sector has major expertise. Despite this, however, total NGO funding in the Australian aid programme has dropped from $114.5 million in 1995-96 to $105.3 million in 1999-2000, a drop of 13.4 per cent in real terms. Only 7 per cent of Australia's ODA goes to NGOs, compared with an international average of 10 per cent.

In addition to various country-specific arguments, the broader rationale for greater Australian NGO participation is compelling:

* NGOs have a unique ability to reach communities in poverty and can respond to the great diversity of development needs through smaller-scale innovative and responsive projects.
* AusAID's 1995 review of NGO programmes found that 90 per cent of them were satisfactory or better in their achievement of their objectives.
* Australian NGOs continue to have extremely strong partnerships with their local in-country counterparts and project beneficiaries.
* NGOs promote aid to the public in Australia and the country receiving aid. The involvement of Australian NGOs through the aid programme also provides linkages between members of the Australian community and communities internationally.

ACFOA calls for government funding to be increased to 10 per cent of the overseas development programme to bring it into line with the international average. In addition, ACFOA believes there is a need to reopen certain country windows and create new mechanisms for NGO participation.

2. East Timor

Even before the recent devastation and displacement, East Timor was one of the poorest parts of East Asia. Since the 30 August 1999 ballot, it has been gripped by a major humanitarian crisis, most of its population has been displaced and there has been widespread destruction of infrastructure and property.

ACFOA commends the government for its support to East Timor and urges that funding allocations continue to be generous. ACFOA also welcomes the fact that the pledges are in grant form, not loans, so that East Timor can begin its development debt-free. Priority must be given to agriculture and rural development.

ACFOA recommends a New Programme for East Timor Reconstruction and Development and Civil Administration.
including $120 million over three years (up to $50 million to be in 2000–2001).

East Timor represents a chance for the government and the aid community to achieve exemplary practice in the delivery of effective development assistance.

3. Indonesia

The new century opens a new chapter in Australia–Indonesia relations and the development context in Indonesia for aid organisations to be working within. Aid organisations also face the challenge of an unpredictable framework in which to work. ACFOA supports the maintenance of current levels of real funding for the Australian aid programme, including retention of the $7 million previously allocated to East Timor.

4. Africa

Australia is in a unique position among donor nations to offer expertise to African countries in the areas of agricultural advice, research and technology transfer, and in environmental sustainability. Australian public support for Africa is substantial, yet Australian ODA to Africa continues to be cut in both volume and geographical coverage. In recognition of the huge development challenges facing Africa, and Australian public support, ACFOA calls for an increase of $25 million, focusing on food security, water and sanitation, and human rights.

5. The Mekong

While 1999 saw a slight economic recovery in Thailand, the rest of the Mekong region remains mired in a recession, resulting in severe impacts on the poor. ACFOA recommends that the level of aid funding to the Mekong region increase by $5 million, placing priority on basic services and gender equity programmes.

6. South Asia

South Asia remains one of the poorest regions of the world. ACFOA recommends a small increase for South Asia of $5 million, with the emphasis on peace building, women and marginalised groups.

7. Gender

Although governments in two-thirds of the Asia-Pacific region have adopted national plans of action since the World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995, these have not all translated into real change for women on the ground nor have they all been incorporated into national development plans. Australia's development assistance programme has a vital role to play in assisting governments and NGOs in the region to turn plans and intentions into realities. To achieve this, ACFOA recommends that the government increase direct funding of gender activities by $5 million.

8. Basic social services

ACFOA strongly supports the government's increased emphasis on basic social services: education, primary health care, reproductive health care, and low-cost water and sanitation. ACFOA is concerned that the rate of increase in funding since the new priorities were announced has been too slow. To achieve the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD Twenty First Century goals for 2015, to which Australia is a signatory, the level of funding to basic social services will have to increase.

ACFOA recommends an increase by $30 million, to achieve a 20 per cent overall average increase for these areas in 2000–2001, of which $5 million should be additional funds earmarked for basic social services and the rest to be achieved through other country programme increases and reallocations.

9. Education

Access to basic education is a key to eradicating poverty by equipping people with the fundamental skills to participate in society, obtain employment, improve their health and control their fertility. Basic education also does more than simply alleviate poverty: it builds self-confidence, expands horizons, and enhances the status of poor and marginalised communities, better equipping communities to stand up for their rights and control their lives.

ACFOA calls for funding for education to be increased by at least 20 per cent or $10 million in the coming year.

10. Health

With the world's population having reached six billion in 1999, it is important that AusAID continue to recognise the interrelationship between programmes for women's and children's health, including family planning and reproductive health, and overall policies that aim to achieve poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, and improvements in education and health. ACFOA supports AusAID's focus in the health sector on assisting in the provision of primary health care.

ACFOA recommends that the government give priority to meeting Australia's commitments to the Cairo Programme of Action by increasing funding to population and women's reproductive health by 30 per cent next year, to reach a target of at least $120 million by 2005 and increases by a minimum of 20 per cent, or $12 million, funding for basic health care in order to double allocations by 2005.

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Development Bulletin 51
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Notes

(a) Simple references without accompanying comments to be inserted in brackets at appropriate place in text, e.g. (Yung 1989).
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Strachan, P. 1996, 'Handing over an operational project to community management in North Darfur, Sudan', Development in Practice, 6(3), 208–16.

Publication/resource listings

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