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WID, WAD, GAD: TRENDS IN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE



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During the past few years, the term "women in development" has become common currency both inside and outside academic settings. But while "women in development" or "WID", is understood to mean the integration of women into global processes of economic, political and social growth and change, there often is confusion about the meaning of two more recent acronyms, "WAD" and "GAD". This paper will begin with an examination of meanings and assumptions embedded in "WID," "WAD" and "GAD" and then will look at the extent to which differing views of the relationship between gender and development have influenced research, policymaking and international agency thinking since the mid-1960s. It is suggested that each term has been associated with a varying set of assumptions and has led to the formulation of different strategies for the participation of women in development strategies.

## ORIGINS

### 1. Women in Development

The term "women in development" came into use in the early 1970s, after the publication of Ester Boserup's Women's Role in Economic Development (1970). Boserup was the first to systematically delineate on a global level the sexual division of

labour that existed in agrarian economies. She analysed the changes that occurred in traditional agricultural practices as societies became modernized and examined the differential impact of those changes on the work done by men and women. She concluded that in sparsely populated regions where shifting agriculture is practiced, women tend to do the majority of agricultural work. In more densely populated regions, where ploughs and other simple technologies are used, men tend to do more of the agricultural work. Finally, in areas of intensive, irrigation-based cultivation, both men and women share in agricultural tasks. Boserup's work was remarkable in that it was based on analysis of data and evidence which had long been available to social scientists and development planners, but she was the first to systematically use gender as an independent variable in her analysis. Boserup's research was later criticized by for its oversimplification of the nature of women's work and roles (e.g., Benéria and Ben 1981), but it was seminal in focussing scholarly attention on the sexual division of labour and the differential impact by gender of development and modernization strategies.

The term "WID" was initially used by the women's committee of the Washington, D.C. chapter of the Society for International Development as part of a deliberate strategy to bring the new evidence generated by Boserup and others to the attention of American policymakers (Maguire 1984). A set of common concerns, loosely labelled "Women in Development" or WID began to be articulated by American liberal feminists who advocated legal and

administrative changes to ensure that women would be better integrated into economic systems (Jaquette 1982). They placed primary emphasis on egalitarianism and on the development of strategies and action programs aimed at minimizing the disadvantages of women in the productive sector and ending discrimination against them.

The WID perspective was closely linked with the modernization paradigm which dominated mainstream thinking on international development during the 1960s and into the '70s. In the 1950s and '60s, conventional wisdom decreed that "modernization," which was usually equated with industrialization, would improve the standards of living of the developing countries. It was argued that through massive expansion of education systems, stocks of well-trained workers and managers would emerge; this in turn would enable the evolution of static, essentially agrarian societies into industrialized and modernized ones. With the growth of the economies of these countries, the benefits of modernization, i.e. better living conditions, wages, education, adequate health services, etc. would "trickle down" to all segments of the society. The policy prescription for this view, which was further supported by the "human capital" approach of theorists such as the American economist Theodore Schultz, was to invest heavily in the establishment of education systems and to develop strong cores of workers and managers (1961). Women rarely, if ever, were considered as a separate unit of analysis in the modernization literature of this period. It was assumed

that the norm of the male experience was generalizable to females and that all would benefit equally as societies increasingly became modernized.

By the 1970s, this view of modernization was being questioned by many researchers. It was argued that the relative position of women had, in fact, improved very little over the past two decades. There was even evidence which suggested that the position of some women had declined (Boserup, 1970; Tinker and Bramson, 1976; Boulding, 1976; Kelly and Elliot, 1982). For example, in general, women were less likely to benefit from the surge of educational expansion (Muchena 1982). Enrolment figures, especially at the tertiary level, tended to be lower for females. Research in the 1970s confirmed Boserup's earlier findings. As new technologies were introduced into the agricultural sector, they usually were directed at men rather than women. In the formal industrial sector, women often were relegated to the lowest-paying, most monotonous and sometimes health-impairing jobs, a condition due in part to their low levels of education, but also due to the role assigned to them as supplementary rather than principal wage earners (Lim 1981).

Under the rubric of WID, the position of women in various sectors of the economy for the first time was studied separate from that of men. The recognition that women's experience of development and of societal change differed from that of men was institutionalized and it became legitimate for research to focus specifically on women's experiences and perceptions. Nonetheless,

the WID approach was based on several assumptions which were at odds with critical trends in social sciences research in the 1970s.

First, the WID approach, as adopted by international agencies, was solidly grounded in traditional modernization theory. It became an acceptable area of focus because it was seen as growing out of modernization theory and the notion of development as a process of slow but steady linear progress. Statistics were beginning to show that women had fared less well from development efforts of the 1960s therefore a new strategy was called for. By the mid-'70s, donor agencies were beginning to implement intervention programs to adjust the imbalance of development "pay-off." For the most part, the solutions adopted were within the realm of the "technological fix" with attention given to the transfer of technology, the provision of extension services and credit facilities or the development of so-called appropriate technologies which would lighten women's workloads (Stamp 1989 forthcoming).

Second, and related to the point above, the WID approach began from an acceptance of existing social structures. Rather than examine why women had fared less well from development strategies during the past decade, the WID approach focussed only on how women could better be integrated into ongoing development initiatives. This non-confrontational approach avoided questioning the sources and nature of women's subordination and oppression and focussed instead on advocacy for more equal

participation in education, employment and other spheres of society (Mbilinyi 1984a). Moreover, because the WID approach was rooted in modernization theory, it did not recognize the contribution of more radical or critical perspectives such as dependency theory or marxist analyses. The WID approach also tended to be ahistorical and overlooked the impact and influence of class, race and culture ( Mbilinyi 1984b; Nijeholt 1987). It focussed on women and gender as a unit of analysis without recognizing the important divisions that exist among women and the frequent exploitation that occurs in most societies of poor women by richer ones. Nor did it recognize that exploitation as being in itself a central component of a global system of capital accumulation (Beneria and Ben 1982). As such the WID approach provided only a crude set of analytical tools which did not benefit from the insights of much of the critical thinking in the social sciences during the 1970s.

Third, the WID approach tended to focus exclusively on the productive aspects of women's work, ignoring or minimizing the reproductive side of women's lives. Thus, WID projects typically have been income-generating activities where women are taught a particular skill or craft and sometimes are organized into marketing cooperatives. Frequently a welfare outlook is added to projects and women are taught aspects of hygiene, literacy or child care at the same time (Buvinic 1986). Project planners and implementors often are well-intentioned volunteers with little or no previous experience. It is rare for feasibility studies to be

undertaken in advance to ensure that a viable market exists for a skill or product that will be produced and it is equally rare for project planners to take serious note of the extent to which women already are overburdened with tasks and responsibilities. The common assumption is that access to income will be a sufficiently powerful stimulant to encourage women somehow to juggle their time in such a way as to participate in yet another activity. When women's income-generating projects do prove to be successful and become significant sources of revenue, they often are appropriated by men. The WID/liberal feminist approach has offered little defense against this reality because it does not challenge the basic social relations of gender. It is based on the assumption that gender relations will change of themselves as women become full economic partners in development.

## 2. Women and Development

The demarcation between the WID and the WAD approaches is not entirely clear. Historically, the WAD approach probably emerged in the second half of the 1970s. It draws some of its theoretical base from dependency theory although dependency theory, for the most part, like marxist analysis, has given remarkably little specific attention to issues of gender subordination. The WAD approach grew out of a concern with the explanatory limitations of modernization theory and its proselytization of the idea that the exclusion of women from earlier development strategies had

been an inadvertent oversight. In essence, the WAD approach begins from the position that women always have been part of development processes and that they did not suddenly appear in the early 1970s as the result of the insights and intervention strategies of a few scholars and agency personnel. Achola Okello Pala noted in the mid-1970s that the notion of "integrating women into development" was inextricably linked to the maintenance of economic dependency of Third World and especially African countries on the industrialized countries (1977). The WAD perspective focusses on the relationship between women and development processes rather than purely on strategies for the integration of women into development. Its point of departure is that women always have been "integrated" into their societies and that the work they do both inside and outside the household is central to the maintenance of those societies, but that this integration serves primarily to sustain existing international structures of inequality. The WAD perspective recognizes that Third World men who do not have elite status also have been adversely effected by the structure of the inequalities within the international system but it has given little analytical attention to the social relations of gender within classes. The question of gender and cross-gender alliances within classes has not been systematically addressed. Theoretically the WAD perspective recognizes the impact of class, but in practical project design and implementation terms, it tends like WID, to group women together without taking strong analytical note of

class, race or ethnicity, all of which may exercise powerful influence on women's actual social status.

WAD offers a more critical view of women's position than does WID but it fails to undertake a full-scale analysis of the relationship between patriarchy, differing modes of production and women's subordination and oppression. The WAD perspective implicitly assumes that women's position will improve if and when international structures become more equitable. In the meantime, the under-representation of women in economic, political and social structures still is identified primarily as a problem which can be solved by carefully designed intervention strategies rather than by more fundamental shifts in the social relations of gender. Finally, it should be noted that there is a tension within the WAD perspective which discourages a strict analytical focus on the problems of women independent of those of men since both sexes are seen to be disadvantaged within oppressive global structures based on class and capital. Since the WAD perspective does not give detailed attention to the overriding influence of the ideology of patriarchy, women's condition primarily is seen within the structure of international and class inequalities.

A second weakness shared by the WAD approach is a singular preoccupation with the productive sector at the expense of the reproductive side of women's work and lives. WID/WAD intervention strategies therefore have tended to concentrate on the development of income-generating activities without taking into account the time burdens that such strategies place on women

(Roberts 1979; McSweeney and Freedman 1982). Development planners have tended to impose western biases and assumptions on the south and the tasks performed by women in the household, including those of social reproduction, are assigned no economic value. The labour invested in family maintenance, including childbearing and rearing, housework, care of the ill and elderly, etc. has been considered to belong to the "private" domain and outside the purview of development projects aimed at enhancing income-generating activities. In essence, this has been a reflection of the tendency of both modernization and dependency theorists to utilize exclusively economic or political economy analyses and to discount the insights of the so-called "softer" social sciences.

### 3. Gender and Development

The gender and development approach has emerged in the 1980s as an alternative to the earlier WID focus. It finds its theoretical roots in socialist feminism and has bridged the gap left by the modernization theorists, linking the relations of production to the relations of reproduction and taking into account all aspects of women's lives (Jaquette 1982). Socialist feminists have identified the social construction of production and reproduction as the basis of women's oppression and have focussed attention on the social relations of gender, questioning the validity of roles which have been ascribed to both women and men in different societies.

Kate Young (1987) has identified some of the key aspects of the GAD approach. Perhaps most significantly, the GAD approach starts from a holistic perspective, looking at "the totality of social organization, economic and political life in order to understand the shaping of particular aspects of society" (Young 1987: 2). GAD is not concerned with women *per se* but with the social construction of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibilities and expectations to women and to men. In contrast to the emphasis on exclusively female solidarity which is highly prized by radical feminists, the GAD approach welcomes the potential contributions of men who share a concern for issues of equity and social justice (Sen and Grown 1987). The GAD approach does not focus singularly on productive or reproductive aspects of women's (and men's) lives to the exclusion of the other. It analyses the nature of women's contribution within the context of work done both inside and outside the household, including non-commodity production, and rejects the public/private dichotomy which commonly has been used as a mechanism to undervalue family and household maintenance work performed by women. Both the socialist/feminist and GAD approaches give special attention to the oppression of women in the family and enter the so-called "private sphere" to analyse the assumptions upon which conjugal relationships are based. GAD also puts greater emphasis on the participation of the state in promoting women's emancipation, seeing it as the duty of the state to provide some of the social services which women in many

countries have provided on a private and individual basis.

The GAD approach sees women as agents of change rather than as passive recipients of development and it stresses the need for women to organize themselves for more effective political voice. It recognizes the importance of both class solidarities and class distinctions but it argues that the ideology of patriarchy operates within and across classes to oppress women. Consequently, socialist feminists and researchers working within the GAD perspective are exploring both the connections among and the contradictions of gender, class, race and development (Maguire 1984).

A key focus of research being done from a GAD perspective is on the strengthening of women's legal rights, including the reform of inheritance and land laws. Research also is examining the confusions created by the co-existence of customary and statutory legal systems in many countries and the tendency for these to have been manipulated by men to the disadvantage of women.

The GAD approach goes further than WID or WAD in questioning the underlying assumptions of current social, economic and political structures. A GAD perspective leads not only to the design of intervention and affirmative action strategies which will ensure that women are better integrated into ongoing development efforts. It leads, inevitably, to a fundamental re-examination of social structures and institutions and, ultimately, to the loss of power of entrenched elites, which

inevitably will effect some women as well as men. Not surprisingly, a fully articulated GAD perspective is less often found in the projects and activities of international development agencies although there are some examples of partial GAD approaches.

### **From Theory to Practice**

As noted, WID, WAD and GAD each have led and continue to lead to different types of development projects. However, it should be emphasized that just as the WID/WAD/GAD approaches are not entirely conceptually distinct it often is not possible to place a development project squarely within a single theoretical framework.

It is clear that the general notion of focussing on women separate from men in at least some projects has been accepted by a considerable number of Third World governments, national and international development agencies, and in many non-governmental organizations. However, to some extent this is a reflection of political expediency and should not be interpreted as a sign of fundamental commitment to the liberation of women. As will be discussed below, while the rhetoric of "integrating women into development" has been accepted by many institutions, the actual process of ensuring equity for women even within those same institutions is still far from complete.

There is no question that the majority of the projects for

women which have emerged during the past two decades find their roots in the WID perspective. In a 1984 analysis of the publications of various international development agencies which were beginning to focus on women, Patricia Maguire noted that they tended to identify the following constraints as being detrimental to the status of women in Third World societies:

- traditions, attitudes and prejudices against women's participation;
- legal barriers;
- limited access to and use of formal education, resulting in high female illiteracy;
- time-consuming nature of women's "chores";
- lack of access to land, credit, modern agricultural equipment, techniques and extension services;
- health burden of frequent pregnancies and malnourishment;
- undermining of women's traditional position as economically contributing partners; and
- inadequate research and information on women which limited ability of development planners to create projects relevant to women. (1984: 13).

An examination of this list confirms the tendency of mainstream development agencies to identify problems within the context of existing socioeconomic structures, that is within the WID/WAD

perspective rather than within the GAD perspective. Each of the problems identified above conceivably could be "solved" through the application of a specific intervention strategy, be it community education, appropriate technology, the development of extension services and credit facilities, family planning, the compilation of further information and statistics, etc. Each of the problems has been identified on the assumption of culpability on the part of the developing countries and neutral disinterest on the part of the industrialized countries. None questions the fundamental inequities of an international system which perpetuates the dependency of the South on the North and none questions the social construction of gender which has relegated women to the domestic realm in both North and South (Rogers, 1980).

An examination of the women-oriented programs and projects which have been developed by bilateral and multilateral agencies since the mid-1970s confirms this tendency. The International Labour Organization (ILO) articulated a Basic Needs Approach in 1976 which was designed to enable women to provide more effectively for their families' most fundamental human needs (food, clothing, shelter, etc.). At the same time it was intended as a strategy to ease women's work burdens, enable them to become more independent economically and participate more actively in community development activities (Palmer 1979; Beneria and Sen 1982). While the Basic Needs Approach may have been based on a desire to ensure that the poor had some control over their own

lives, and as such was an improvement on earlier strategies, it did not challenge existing patterns of inequality. It did not focus on issues of redistribution of land or wealth within societies nor did it question the sexual division of labour within households. As such it can be seen as another example of modernization theory-driven development.

An analysis of the programs of many multilateral and bilateral development agencies reveals a similar pattern. Various strategies for the integration of women into on-going programs, and affirmative action to ensure greater representation of women in agency staff positions can be identified. For example, the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD has emphasized the necessity for member countries to establish formal WID strategies, to put aside special funds for women-related activities, to fund research on WID, and to advocate the employment of women in multilateral organizations and in development banks (Rathgeber 1988). Bilateral agencies like the Swedish SIDA, the Danish DANIDA, the British ODA and the Canadian CIDA all have adopted strategies to ensure that women in developing countries benefit directly from their programs and, to varying degrees, to try to ensure that female staff are represented in positions of power within their own organizations. However, few strategies have been developed to question or attempt to influence in a profound fashion the social relations of gender in any given society.

There have been few in-depth analyses of the actual processes

of integration of women and women-related concerns into the programs of donor agencies. However, a study of US AID's WID Office by Kathleen Staudt revealed that these objectives had been pursued with varying degrees of interest and commitment. Staudt's (1982) description of the establishment of the WID Office in 1974 is instructive. She notes that while each AID policy paper must have a "woman impact" statement, such statements are usually no more than a paragraph and are often recycled from one document to another. In the early 1980s, the WID Office staff consisted of only five professionals, all female, in an agency that had overwhelmingly male professional and female clerical staff. Staudt notes that "Agency personnel frequently complain that WID is a 'women's lib' issue being used to export American ideas, rather than an issue grounded in development and/or equity justification" (1982: 270). The WID Office had a weak power base because of its small staff allocation, a small budget which necessitated dependency on the budgets of other bureaus within the Agency, few allies in the technical areas and a limited mandate which enabled the office to raise concerns but not to veto projects. Moreover, Staudt notes that despite efforts to increase the number of women benefitting from AID grants, in the early 1980s the number of AID-supported international trainees who were women was 13 percent, up 4 percent from 1974 but equal to what the number had been in the early 1960s. Staudt demonstrates quite clearly that there may exist a considerable gap between the articulation of official policy on the part of

agencies and the development of support within the agencies for the implementation of such policies. Thus the existence of official WID policies cannot be judged as an accurate indicator of commitment to gender issues within an agency.

Agencies have taken different approaches with respect to the integration of gender issues into their programs (Rathgeber 1988). Some, such as SIDA (the Swedish International Development Authority) began to finance projects aimed specifically at women as early as the 1960s. Others, such as the British ODA (Overseas Development Administration), steadfastly refused to give special support to projects for women until the second half of the 1980s, claiming that to do so would be to impose the cultural biases of the North on the South. Private foundations engaged in the support of research in developing countries, such as Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie all have chosen not to establish separate women's offices or programs, arguing that to do so would be to perpetuate the notion that "women's" issues are somehow separate from those of men. Despite the fact that they have not established WID offices however, each of the three foundations has supported many women-related projects within the context of existing program structures. Ford Foundation, moreover, has required all institutions requesting support to provide evidence that women participate in their projects.

The World Bank has had an Advisor on Women in Development since the early 1970s, but in the mid-80s this office was expanded and given a higher profile within the Bank. A major

focus of the expanded office during the late 1980s has been on "Safe Motherhood" under the argument that: "Improving maternal health helps involve women more effectively in development" (Herz and Measham 1987). The World Health Organization similarly has made this a major focus. It can be argued that such initiatives, while of obvious and crucial importance, are based within a traditional view of women's roles.

In 1987, AID carried out an evaluation of its experience with Women in Development between 1973-1985 (AID 1987). The Agency identified three different kinds of projects: i) integrated projects which require gender-sensitive designs to meet their objectives; ii) women-only projects which usually are small in scope and labour-intensive for AID staff; and iii) women's components in larger projects. It was found that those projects which had included a careful analysis of the sexual division of labour and responsibilities and were designed in such a way as to realistically reflect the contexts within which men and women worked, ultimately were more efficient in meeting developmental goals. The evaluation also revealed that income-generating projects for women rarely were successful in improving the economic positions of participants. Moreover, job training projects for women also usually failed because women lacked capital to establish small businesses where they could utilize their new skills. Perhaps most disturbingly, however, the evaluation revealed that even in the period 1980-84, by which time the WID Office had been established for several years, 40

percent of the projects evaluated, made no mention at all of women. In the earlier period, 1972-77, 64 percent of the projects analysed had made no mention of women. The universe of projects analysed was only 98, therefore the numbers are too small for definitive conclusions, however they do reveal a trend which is in keeping with the attitudes reported by Staudt (1982).

### **towards the More Effective Implementation of GAD**

As already noted, it is difficult to find examples of development projects which have been designed from a GAD perspective. One might speculate that such projects would be designed to empower women, to give them an equal voice by recognizing the full spectrum of their knowledge, experience and activities, including both productive and reproductive labour. Projects designed from a GAD perspective would question traditional views of gender roles and responsibilities and point towards a more equitable definition of the very concept of "development" and of the contributions made by women and by men to the attainment of societal goals.

The WID Unit of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) currently is supporting a number of research projects in Africa which are making a concerted attempt to view women as actors in development rather than as passive recipients of change. For example, projects in Kenya, Tanzania and Nigeria are looking at women's access to land within customary and statutory

law, and assessing the extent to which women's productivity has been negatively effected by legal systems which favour male ownership and indeed sometimes even fail to recognize female ownership. The research begins from the recognition that women are primary producers of food and that denial of land rights has had negative consequences not only for them personally but also for households which are dependent on them. A project in Ghana is examining the impact of technological change on women farmers, analysing alternative methods of income generation which have been developed by female farmers after part of their land was appropriated for industrial purposes. A project in Burkina Faso is looking at the impact of fuelwood shortages on women's agricultural practices and on family nutritional intakes. The researchers have discovered that as women are forced to spend longer periods of time searching for firewood, they have less time for agriculture. This in turn leads to lower crop yields with the outcome of less food for family consumption and less surplus for sale in local markets. Second, women are beginning to cook less, serving their families cheap store-bought foods or serving food cooked several hours earlier and which may have already become tainted.

The Unit currently is supporting a major network project on Women and Natural Resource Management in Africa. This project, which involves researchers in francophone and anglophone Africa, has as its overall objective the legitimization of women's knowledge about the environment. It focusses on three

interrelated themes:

i) Natural resources as they are perceived by individuals and groups. This concern begins from the position that different cultures and actors within cultures conceive of the environment in different ways. The current tendency among development planners is to focus on natural environment as a "problem" but how that "problem" is defined has had important implications for women. An example of such a conceptual problem is the general failure of policymakers and international agencies to recognize that deforestation has created a double crisis for women. While there is awareness of the energy problem - shortage of domestic fuel for example - the livestock feed problem has for the most part been invisible. As a consequence, reforestation schemes have advocated the planting of trees such as eucalyptus which do not provide women, who often have responsibility for care of small animals, with necessary sources of fodder and they face grave difficulties in fulfilling their responsibilities with respect to family livestock.

ii) The relationship between individuals and the natural environment. This concern focusses on women's lives as they intersect with the changing environment. A substantial literature already exists on African women's loss of political power and personal autonomy, and the increased burden of labour placed upon them as a result both of changing environments and changing gender relations. The network project will apply to specific resource issues the insights of earlier research regarding

property and use rights, changing economic practices and relations and the impact of state and aid policies on women.

iii) The relationship between communities and the environment.

This third concern focusses on the ways in which communities interact with natural resources. Inevitably this is linked with the relationship of individuals with the environment insofar as many aspects of women's decision-making are organized by the groups in which women participate. Women always have worked together to solve problems regarding natural resources, using self-help groups, revolving credit clubs, and other forms of contemporary political organization. Some evidence suggests that women have imaginatively adapted their traditional associations, such as age sets and cultivation groups, to these contemporary organizations. The project will therefore attempt to establish the positive aspects of group strategy, including women's traditional practices, in order to correct policymakers' neglect of women's collective decision-making capacity as a powerful and necessary human resource.

These projects, all of which are being carried out by African researchers, share a common concern for the empowerment of women and for the legitimization of women's knowledge and experience. In essence, the researchers will document women's knowledge and then translate it into language which will be familiar and acceptable to policymakers. Ultimately, through such strategies women's knowledge, views and experience will become important components of national decision-making processes.

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