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**Empowering Partnerships for Women's Equality:
The Challenge for Northern NGOs**

by

Lynne C. Hately B.A. (Hons)

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts

Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Carleton University

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Christopher J. Maule, Director
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Professor J. O'Manique, Supervisor

Abstract

Northern non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have designed the "partnership strategy" to improve their work for and with people in the South. Although the strategy provides a vision for which NGOs can strive, it has neglected to account for the differential needs and experiences of women and men. The failure of NGOs to incorporate a gender analysis in their work marginalizes women in development planning and practice, and interferes with the empowerment model of development that some NGOs seek to practice. Based on writings of and interviews with Southern women, this thesis argues that if an NGO is to achieve a model of development that enables women to become empowered, it must strive to become fully equitable and gender sensitive. The thesis concludes with strategies to assist Northern NGOs to challenge the ethnocentric and male biases that are embedded within their organizational structures and operations.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mother, Nancy, for her courage to think and act differently and her ability to instill in her daughter the desire for change.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many women who were willing to participate in interviews and who shared so many experiences with me.

I would also like to thank both my Supervisor, John O'Manique and my advisor, Jared Keil for their interest and support in this project. Special mention must go to Joanna Kerr for her continual guidance, critical feedback and never ending supply of resources.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As we approach the twentieth century we hope that the perspectives of poor third world women will be taken seriously in decision-making processes, from our households, communities, workplaces to national, regional and international levels of policy-making (Antrobus, 1989: 28).

The objective of this study is to determine whether Northern non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of international development, can support a process of development that provides enabling environments for women living in the South¹ to become empowered. Following from this, it investigates whether Northern NGOs can create a climate for the transformation of gender relations within society. It explores the potential for and the limitations of the relationships between Southern women's groups and Northern NGOs.

Since 1975, international development agencies have made efforts to incorporate women and their needs and concerns into development policy making and planning. Various development models have been designed to alleviate the problems that women

¹ The term South appears to be more common amongst academics, scholars, and local activists in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Women from these regions prefer this term to the Third World, but insist that we recognize the heterogeneity of their lives and experiences and acknowledge the political and economic situations that they live under in relation to the North. Although there are still problems associated with the concept "North/South", for instance it is not geographically correct, it is more current than "First/Third world" and serves as a useful analytical tool.

experience as a result of their gender². However, there is evidence that the lives and prospects of women have not notably improved throughout this period. The World's Women: The Trends and Statistics 1970-1990 reports that it "is clear from the statistics and indicators presented that women continue to lag far behind men in equality of opportunity in health, education, work and decision-making at all levels" (UN, 1991).

Many women's groups throughout the world are actively challenging and struggling against oppressions that women face based on their gender, race, class and sexuality, on their colour, geographical location, faith and language, and on their age, ability, historical experience and ethnicity.

Some of these groups, located in the South, are articulating a vision for a better world and are developing strategies to eradicate these oppressions. They are seeking to eliminate the subordination experienced by women and other oppressed groups. Recognizing the power inequities reinforced by patriarchy, imperialism and colonialism, they are calling for the upheaval of these systems of domination to enable the broadest and deepest development of communities, free of all oppressions. For Development Alternatives for Women of a New Era (DAWN), a Southern networking and research

² Gender refers to the socially constructed relations between men and women. By using the term gender rather than sex, a very crucial point is made: our basic identities as men and women are socially constructed and are not based on fixed biological differences between male and female (Keays, 1991). Gender is an important social relation that impacts on all aspects of life and has the potential to influence the design and outcomes of development strategies (Elson, 1991).

group, the vision includes:

A world where inequality based on class, gender, and race is absent from every country, and from the relationship among countries... A world where basic needs become basic rights and where poverty and all forms of violence are eliminated. Each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity, and women's values of nurturance and solidarity will characterize human relationships... We want a world where all institutions are open to participatory democratic processes, where women share in determining priorities and making decisions (Sen & Grown, 1987: 80-81).

It is likely that this vision could represent the needs and aspirations of a great majority of the world's population.

The predominant approach that feminist groups in the South have embraced to support the improvement of women's condition and position is based on notions of empowerment. This process aims to raise women's consciousness about their situations and seeks to provide strategies for women to challenge the systems of domination. Empowerment has been best defined as the capacity of people to act on their own behalf to attain economic self sufficiency and political self-reliance in their pursuit of equality (Keays & Woroniuk, 1991).

Although the numbers and forms of these groups have increased along with the growth of the women's movement, of all the international development agencies, only a few Northern NGOs have been willing to adopt notions of empowerment in their work with Southern women. This project strives to determine whether these NGOs in the North can support Southern women's groups through the empowerment model presently being

practised by Southern women's groups.

The Rationale

The conventional aid relationship as practised by many Northern development agencies reinforces a practice of discursive interaction- a situation not based on a relationship of equals but rather on an unequal relationship between a colonizer and colonized or the oppressor and the oppressed (McKenna, 1991: 114). It is based to a great extent on two characteristics. First, the linkages assume a Northern expert Southern recipient association; Northern donors have the expertise that Southern groups and individuals need in order to move along the development continuum (Stamp, 1989). Second, since Northern organizations have access to and provide the resources to the South, they are able to control much of the decision-making and assume the dominant role in the relationship. The underlying philosophy of the conventional aid relationship is grounded in a view of the world as composed of two distinct parts: the perceived dynamic and progressive peoples of the North and the undeveloped, helpless poverty stricken peoples of the South.

The construction of this relationship has tended to discount the understanding that Southern women and men have about their situations. Instead, knowledge about the South has been created by Northern experts and has been used to inform, organize and expand the practices of international development. Rather than correctly informing development practice, in many cases, this knowledge has served to perpetuate the power

relations between Northern and Southern organizations and has imposed Northern assumptions on to the lives of men and women in the South.

The way in which Northern development organizations understand and view people in the South affects the approach that they choose to use in their work. An intimate relationship exists between established views of the world and its people and the development policy and strategy implemented (Maguire, 1984: 19). Ultimately, the representations of Southern women and men become embedded in the conceptual rationale of development policy and action. Conversely, the conceptual rationale underlying a policy approach comes to mirror the Northern organization's established views of the needs, circumstances and problems of societies and people in the South. Both the approach taken and the manner in which people in the South are represented are important determinants of the type of relationship that a Northern development organization forms with a Southern group.

Since the origins of international development in the late 1940s, many of the relationships between Northern organizations and Southern people and communities have been established to provide channels for the dissemination of resources needed to spur Southern countries to become developed. Multilateral, bilateral development agencies and countless numbers of NGOs in the North are supposedly relied upon to provide technologies, expertise, management skills, knowledges and funds to assist Southern countries and peoples on the road to "modernity".

Many Southern groups and some progressive Northern NGOs have been challenging the nature of the relationships that have evolved between Northern donors and Southern women and men. They are calling for a more equal relationship that enables their perspectives, needs, experiences and strategies to be central to all aspects of development decision-making. Many Southern feminists are challenging the manner in which Northern organizations are representing Southern women and the ways that they are approaching women in their overseas work. Moreover, they are criticising the paternalistic attitudes adopted by Northern organizations that reinforce the Northern dominant expert and the Southern subordinate recipient association.

The Northern male bias in development planning and practice has been well documented. For instance, planners incorrectly assume that societies are structured by nuclear families with a husband, a wife and two children. Policies and projects are created on a sexual division of labour³ in which the male is the productive breadwinner outside the home and the female is the homemaker responsible for the reproductive and domestic work in the household. These concepts are based on the faulty assumption that men and women equally control and share economic resources and decision-making power in the household (Moser, 1989). However public/ private distinctions are not universally meaningful. Many women in the South are sole support parents and are responsible for reproductive (child rearing and household tasks), productive (income

³ This analytical construct examines who does what work and the compensation received. Work is defined broadly as all human labour and not just production of goods and services measured by the gross national product (Keays, 1991: 2).

earning, sub-contracting, informal sector work) and community management work (health care, infrastructure maintenance, allocation of limited resources). In those households composed of a husband and wife, resources are not always shared equally and often women must carry the triple burden of productive, reproductive and community manager work.

Some Northern NGOs are acknowledging the weaknesses inherent in the relationships that they have fostered with Southern groups. In response to the demands of Southern groups, many Northern NGOs have designed the "partnership strategy" to replace traditional patterns of dominance with collaboration and cooperation. The "partnership strategy" is intended to offer the potential for a more equal relationship. It is intended to give more autonomy and control to Southern individuals and groups to enable them to define their own development process. Northern NGOs are trying to find ways to continue giving to Southern groups in a manner that puts the Southern group on an equal footing.

Partnership has become the word of the decade for all kinds of Northern development organizations to describe their relationships with their counterpart organizations in the South. Although the strategy has caused some NGOs to rethink their relationships with Southern groups, many Southern feminists criticise the strategy for its ethnocentric and androcentric biases; it fails to adequately address the power imbalances that exist based on gender, race, class, ethnicity and geographical location. In most cases, the differential

needs, experiences, and concerns that exist between women and men are not even acknowledged.

The multifarious standpoints of women from the South offer a unique starting point for Northern NGOs to challenge the ethnocentric and male biased assumptions underlying their processes and models of development. Southern feminist critiques are useful to produce principles that have the potential to both transform the relationship between Southern women and Northern NGOs and support women's empowerment.

I will argue in this paper that if NGOs really want to assist women in the South, they must rethink their strategies and ways of operating to address the needs and concerns of women as well as those of men. They must embrace notions of empowerment to enable women to challenge the systemic obstacles that they face daily and to have an active role in all aspects of decision-making. NGOs must be willing to challenge their organizational structures and operations to uproot the forms of domination that interfere with the practice of a more balanced relationship and their capacity to deal with gender relations. The ultimate goal for which NGOs must strive is to become fully equitable and gender sensitive.

Methodology

Defining a Method

I undertook this research task as a Northern feminist eager to understand the nature and

relationships of development from Southern feminist standpoints.

Since my studies in the field of international development began eighteen months ago, I have been completely overwhelmed with the Northern and androcentric or male biased orientation of development policy and planning. Educated throughout my undergraduate years in the study of human development in the field of psychology and employed in the roles as counsellor and therapist at different times in my life, I have come to understand the importance of having autonomy and control over one's decisions, in both theory and practice.

The analyses of Southern feminists and their experiences with women's groups that seek to empower women, form the foundation of a body of literature that addresses these issues of empowerment, autonomy, and economic and political self-reliance. These writings are based on real life experiences that have been informed by their identity as women living in Southern countries and their struggles against patriarchy, neo-colonialism and imperialism.

It was for this reason that I began my analysis from the multifarious perspectives of Southern women. Critical of the hegemony of Northern research and the androcentric biases underlying development theory and practice, I have attempted to shift the focus of research from the North to the South by situating the analysis from the standpoints of some Southern feminists.

Gathering Information

This research is based on the analysis of primary and secondary literature and documentation and informal and formal interviews. There were two main parts to the research. On the one hand, I focused on the roles of NGOs and their strategies for change. On the other, I gathered Southern feminist analyses of the nature and process of development and their critiques of donor organizations.

Annual reports, promotion materials and discussion papers were gathered from NGOs. Seven formal and six informal interviews were conducted with staff from ten NGOs⁴.

Southern feminist analyses were gathered from papers presented at conferences, discussion papers circulating within NGOs, in addition to published sources. As well, a random sample of women from the South who were attending conferences and workshops in the Toronto/ Ottawa region were selected for interviews. Women who had previously worked with women's groups and were originally from the South but are now living in Canada were also sought for an interview. Over a period of eight months, I conducted eight formal interviews. The main themes from these interviews and the writings from the South were extracted and assisted me in determining the direction of the study.

⁴ These included Horizons for Friendship, Katalysis Foundation, Oxfam, Friends of the Earth, MATCH International, Inter Pares, Youth Challenge International, CUSO, the Inter-Church Fund and the North-South Institute.

All of the interviews were based on a research instrument of open ended questions (see Appendix A). Most interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. However, in a few cases I chose not to or I was requested not to. In two situations I was able to hold a follow-up interview.

Limitations to Research

Although I hoped to learn more about their interpretations and critiques of international development, it was never my intention to pretend that I could represent Southern women. I recognized that the way I went about my research, the literature and documentation that I gathered, and the interpretation of interviews are informed and biased by my Northern white middle class values and my Northern feminist beliefs. Moreover, two male professors from the North were involved throughout my study in the capacity of advisors. It is hard to know if I have been honest to the authors and to the women interviewed. It must be noted that in the end, although I present the voices and experiences of Southern women throughout the paper, my interpretations remain my own.

Since I had made a conscious decision to stay in Canada to carry out my work, I was faced with a number of constraints that may have interfered with my interpretations and analysis. First, although I was able to conduct a number of interviews, the women that passed through Ottawa and Toronto were on very tight schedules. The time that I had with them was limited and the interviews were not as in-depth as I wanted.

Second, in comparison to the amount of documentation reflecting the Northern and dominant framework, the amount of research material from Southern feminist viewpoints available in Northern organization's resource centres, libraries, and bookstores was small. Because of the large amount of material available from Northern perspectives, I was constantly challenged to ensure that my analysis was not co-opted by this dominant paradigm.

I was also faced with constraints relating to my research with Northern NGOs. By virtue of the fact that I was an outsider and a graduate student researcher, my knowledge about NGOs' processes, objectives, and structures was limited to what was revealed in primary and secondary sources and what I learned through interviews. My previous experiences working with the NGO community⁵ and interning at MATCH International did assist to inform my understanding. However, since I was not working within an NGO during my study, I was unable to observe the actual decision-making processes and the dynamics of the organization. It is to be expected that a gap exists between written policy statements and discussion papers and actual practice.

Time constraints also interfered in the interviews I held with staff of Northern NGOs.

⁵ Over the last seven years I have worked with two Canadian NGOs, Children's International Summer Villages (CISV) and Youth Challenge International (YCI). CISV is an international organization promoting international peace and cross cultural understanding through children and youth. YCI brings an international team of youth together to work on community service projects in Southern countries. Both promote tolerance, respect and cross cultural understanding.

Although people I contacted were interested and supportive of my work, many were extremely busy. Most NGOs are short staffed, suffer heavy work loads and are experiencing financial cutbacks. The length of time available for those that accepted an interview was limited. In total, I had two refusals.

Although there were important limitations to my work, this study does make a valuable contribution by attempting to provide strategies for Northern NGOs to assist them in designing empowering relations with Southern women's groups. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the process of change by helping to raise the awareness within NGOs about the importance of gender and to increase the support in the Northern development community for the empowerment approach.

Overview

Chapter two will extensively analyse the relationships that have evolved between Northern development organizations and Southern women. Both the manner in which women from the South have been represented and the way in which they have been approached will be investigated. I will argue that the empowerment approach derived from some Southern feminist analyses provides the most appropriate framework for working with Southern women.

Chapter three will take a closer look at the relationships that Northern NGOs are practising with Southern women. It will examine the origins, elements and limitations

of the "partnership strategy". I will argue that the strategy provides the potential for a more equal relationship but that it fails to adequately acknowledge and address the power inequities based on gender. This gap prescribes the need for an extensive critique to determine the constraints that interfere with NGOs potential to both provide a supportive environment for women's empowerment and adopt a gender sensitive approach.

Following on the back of this analysis, Chapter four will critique the structures and operations of Northern NGOs. Situated in Southern feminist analyses and based on interviews with Southern women, the chapter will analyse the organizational and operational constraints that impede NGOs capacity to deal with gender as an analytical construct and hence inhibit their ability to support the empowerment approach. I will argue that unless NGOs adopt strategies to overcome these constraints, it is unlikely that they will be able to practice more egalitarian relations with Southern women and men.

In response to the critique, chapter five will provide strategies for Northern NGOs to challenge Northern biased values: attitudes that are manifested in their operations and structures. Interviews and writings of some Southern feminists serves as the basis for identifying and defining these strategies.

This paper is only a beginning in the overall process of change for both myself and Northern NGOs that take up the challenge of becoming gender equitable. It concludes

with a story about my journey in writing this thesis and the struggles that I faced; struggles that Northern organizations must face in order to redesign a relationship that responds to the needs, concerns, experiences, knowledges and strategies as articulated by Southern women.

Chapter 2

Pulling Apart the Relationship:

Northern Development Agencies and Southern Women

Introduction

Since the 1950s, a diversity of interventions has been designed to reflect the changes in macroeconomic and social policy approaches towards international development. These have included "modernization" and accelerated economic growth, basic needs and redistribution and compensatory measures and structural adjustment. The shifts in policy approaches towards women have reflected these general shifts in international development (Moser, 1989: 1806). They have also reflected the established ethnocentric and androcentric views about Southern women and their capabilities.

Researchers, particularly women identified as feminist, have investigated the diversity of interventions that has been designed to assist women. They have pulled apart the approaches to determine the rationale and impacts of the various strategies. They have analyzed the evolution of the major approaches that serve as the foundation of the relationship between Northern development organizations and Southern women. This work is very useful to understand the dynamics that have developed between Southern women and Northern donors. It highlights the approaches toward and the representation of Southern women as seen by Northern donors. These approaches, as labelled by Moser -- Welfare, Equity, Anti-poverty, Efficiency, and Empowerment --

reflect the representation and beliefs of Northern organizations about the lives of Southern women (Moser, 1989).

In differentiating between these approaches, it is useful to consider the conceptual distinctions between first, the condition and position of women and second, practical and strategic gender needs (Rathgeber, 1992). Kate Young (1988) refers to the condition of women as women's material state in terms of, for example, access to education, credit or employment, health and legal status. The position of women relates to women's status relative to men in the social relations of gender. This analytical tool is derived from Maxine Molyneux's idea of practical and strategic needs.

Practical gender needs arise from the concrete conditions of women's position and the gender division of labour. They result from day to day needs for food, shelter, safe water, clothing, education and employment. While practical gender needs are concerned with the alleviation of specific and concrete disadvantages faced by women, strategic gender needs are derived from an analysis of women's subordination and provide the basis for formulating strategies to improve women's overall position in relation to men. Strategic gender needs, which will vary, depending on the particular cultural and socio-political context of women, include the abolition of the sexual division of labour, the alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and child care on women, the removal of institutionalized forms of discrimination, the establishment of political equality and adoption of measures to combat male violence and men's control over women.

(Molyneux, 1985: 232). It is important that international agencies address both types of need (Rathgeber, 1990).

Although the various approaches are being presented below in a linear and evolutionary framework that reflects the general changes in development policy, within the Canadian NCO community today, elements of these approaches are all in practice (Moser 1989: 1806). Moreover, these approaches are not set in stone. In practice a development agency typically will combine a variety of elements from the various approaches to use in their work.

'Relief and Welfare Approach'

Following World War II, international development assistance was composed of two parallel approaches: economic growth and emergency relief. Economic growth was represented institutionally by multilateral and bilateral development agencies. Rooted in their colonial and missionary past, national and international relief agencies took on the responsibility of protecting the vulnerable through emergency relief (Buvinic, 1986: 658).

This division had great significance for Southern women. The international economic aid transferred to capital intensive industrial and agricultural production to accelerate growth essentially became the exclusive domain of the male labour force and focused on increasing the productive capacity of men. On the other hand, poor women became

the main beneficiaries of emergency relief and were targeted for family welfare provision. Top-down handouts of goods and services were delivered to relieve women's roles as mothers and housewives and to improve family and children's welfare. Training programs were designed to improve those skills deemed appropriate for housewives and mothers (Moser, 1989: 1809).

The 'welfare approach' is based on a number of assumptions. First, along with the sick, elderly and disabled, women are represented as a vulnerable population. They are identified as passive recipients that contribute little to economic development. Their reproductive, productive and community work are not acknowledged as being central and essential to a community's development. Second, since women are considered active as a function of their roles within the family, motherhood and child rearing are seen as the most important roles women can play in economic development. The Family-centred welfare approach focuses entirely on women's reproductive role, assigns the paid-productive roles to men and emphasizes the mother/child dyad (Buvinic, 1983: 24; Moser, 1989: 1807-1809).

This family-centred model prescribes interventions directed at women's reproductive roles. The most important concern is a family's physical survival. Women are targeted for food aid and maternal and child health care to improve the future of the family and children (Buvinic, 1989). For example, in its projects, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees most often focuses on women in their reproductive role. To

alleviate malnutrition, nutritional programs for young children and education for pregnant and nursing mothers is provided. As well, since the 1970s, welfare programs have been extended to include population control in the form of family planning. Women are identified in their reproductive roles as primarily responsible for limiting the size of the family and decreasing the birth rate (Buvinic, 1983: 24; Moser, 1989: 1809).

Welfare programs may help to satisfy some of women's practical gender needs relating to their reproductive role and improve women's condition in the short term. However, the approach does little to meet women's strategic gender needs to improve their overall position in society. Instead of recognizing the systemic obstacles that interfere in the improvement of women's condition and position, the 'welfare approach' identifies women as the problem, and assumes that interventions aimed at women and the family will provide the solution.

Although the top-down approach risks creating relations of dependency rather than assisting women to become more independent, development agencies and governments are supportive of welfare oriented projects because they are not politically nor economically contentious to implement. They are carried out in sex-segregated environments for women only and do not threaten other programs. For these reasons, the 'welfare approach' remains one of the predominant forms of programming that development agencies utilize to support women.

'Equity Approach'

By the 1970s, dissatisfaction with the 'welfare approach' had grown among Northern development agencies due to a combination of factors. First, researchers were producing evidence that women were not benefiting from this form of development and were in fact being harmed by "modernization". Ester Boserup released a ground breaking study entitled Women's Role in Economic Development (1970) that pulled together evidence that had previously been neglected by development planners and mainstream economists. She was the first to delineate systematically on a global level the sexual divisions of labour that existed in the economies of some countries of Africa, Latin America, South and East Asia and the Middle East. Her study analyzed the differential impact of development strategies on women and men. She concluded that women were active contributors to the productivity of their communities but that their economic contribution was ignored in the planning and implementation of development projects and in national statistics. Rather than improving women's lives, "modernization" appeared to be eroding any power or authority that women traditionally held, causing a deterioration of their living conditions (Maguire, 1984: 7).

This evidence coincided with the recognition by development economists that transfers of capital and technology from the industrialized countries had not spread from the "modern" enclaves to the "traditional" sectors. The modernization strategy of the last two decades was not meeting the needs of an overwhelming majority of people in Southern countries (Buvinic, 1983: 23).

The increasing amount of evidence that challenged the efficacy of the modernization paradigm and its impact on women put pressure on international institutions to respond in some way (Moser, 1989: 1800). The United Nations declared the years 1975-1985 the International Women's Decade, bringing international attention and legitimacy to the concerns of women in both the industrialized and developing countries. It promoted the recognition of women's contributions to economic development and offered an approach that centred on women as a unit of analysis (Buvinic, 1986: 659).

These factors caused women to be put on the international agenda and influenced many academics, practitioners and policy staff in agencies and government to design alternative approaches to incorporate women into the development process. The proliferation of material and projects using these approaches -- Equity, Anti-poverty, and Efficiency -- became classified together as the Women in Development approach or WID (Moser, 1989: 1810).

Equity, the original objective of WID, centres on the inequality between men and women in the public and the private spheres. Its main objective is to eliminate the subordination of women in the family relative to men and in male and female relationships in the marketplace. It starts from the premise that women have been left out of the development process and have been negatively affected relative to men.

Unlike the 'welfare approach' that values women only as reproducers, the 'equity

approach' emphasizes women's roles. Designed to meet women's strategic gender needs, the 'equity approach' seeks to reduce inequality in the sexual division of labour and to increase women's political and economic autonomy (Moser, 1989: 1810). Programming varies from consciousness raising to sex education to the provision of credit and the design of employment schemes.

The 'equity approach' is based on the view that women should be active participants in development instead of merely beneficiaries of welfare assistance. However, projects assign women to the economic sector where wages are low and inconsistent and products are in low demand whilst men are supported in the modern sectors. This discrimination results in a widening gap between men and women. Furthermore, although the approach acknowledges women's productive roles as reproducers, producers and community managers, the projects do little to address the increasing workload of women (Elson, 1991a; Kardam, 1991; Staudt, 1985).

The 'equity approach' was officially endorsed at the International Women's Year (IWY) conference in 1975. Embedded as policy in the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of Objectives of IWY, it influenced the future agendas of international and national development organizations and governments (Moser, 1989: 1810-1811). However, since it challenged the existing subordination of women relative to men, development agencies and governments were and continue to be hesitant to embrace the 'equity approach'. They prefer not to tamper with what they considered the cultural

values of a community by calling for changes in the political and social relations between men and women (Buvinic, 1983: 25). As Moser writes:

Politically, the majority of development agencies were hostile to equity programs precisely because of their intention to meet not only practical gender needs but also strategic gender needs, whose very success depended on an implicit redistribution of power (Moser, 1989: 1811)

Since the 'equity approach' depended on legislative top-down policy and strategy and the efforts of governments have not been on side, in most cases the approach has been unsuccessful in producing any meaningful change (Moser, 1989: 1811).

'Anti-Poverty Approach'

The reluctance of development agencies to deal with gender construction and the inequality between men and women caused many to adopt the 'anti-poverty approach'. Rather than examine why women had fared less well in the past, the 'anti-poverty approach' focuses on how to better integrate women into development initiatives. Economic inequality is seen as rooted in income inequality and not gender inequality. The primary objectives are the eradication of poverty and the redistribution of growth (Moser, 1989: 1811).

The general shift to redistribution stemmed from the evidence that the "modernization process" was failing to redistribute income and solve the problems of poverty and unemployment in Southern countries (Moser, 1989: 1812). The result was the design of new strategies to meet the needs of the poor and to raise their standards of living. With the development of the basic needs strategy, the previous parallel approaches of

economic growth and relief began to merge. Development agencies such as the World Bank began to focus on basic human needs and social policy.

The basic needs strategy recognized the importance of targeting women. Research on women and development showed that the ratio of women to men in the poorest income brackets was greater than in the population as a whole. Furthermore, the economic performance in the lowest income bracket was directly correlated with the economic activity of women in the household. Women's productive role was important to alleviate poverty and to promote balanced economic growth. Women's productivity needed to be raised to increase income in the lowest income households (Buvinic, 1983: 16).

The 'anti-poverty approach' centres on women's productivity in the economic sphere. The underlying rationale of the approach is that women's poverty and inequality with men is attributed to their lack of access to land and capital, and the sexual division of the labour market (Moser, 1989: 1812). Programming centres on employment and income generation (e.g. skills training) and access to productive resources (e.g. credit).

Employment programs and income generating schemes are designed to meet women's practical gender needs by augmenting their income. They are often small in scale, assisted by short term grants and are welfare oriented. They are time consuming and bring in little income (Buvinic, 1983: 25). Since they aim to increase women's

productivity in domestic activities (e.g. knitting, crafts, baking) they relegate women to the economic sector where wages are low and inconsistent. The projects are rarely sustainable. By ignoring the importance of addressing women's strategic gender interests, they fail to increase women's autonomy. In fact, since employment projects often increase the amount of work for women by extending their work day and increasing their triple burden, the 'anti-poverty approach' threatens to jeopardize the realization of practical gender needs (Buvinic, 1986; Overholt, Anderson, Cloud & Austin, 1985).

The 'anti-poverty approach' recognizes women's important contribution as potential producers but fails to support women's reproductive and community "productive work". Furthermore, the approach fails to challenge the structural inequalities that exist between men and women. It neglects the obstacles that impede women's economic independence -- obstacles that result from women's relations with men -- and justifies their legitimacy with terms like cultural, traditional and natural (Moser, 1989: 1813).

Development agencies attempted to focus on basic needs strategies to assist people in the South attain a certain standard of living. However, the strategy depends on a redistribution of resources. It has high political and economic costs. Agencies are unwilling to adopt elements of this approach since they are not willing to interfere with certain "traditions" by restructuring the social fabric of communities (Buvinic, 1983: 26).

'Efficiency/ Integrative Approach'

The 'efficiency approach' evolved to reflect the general trend of development in the 1980s and 1990s. With the deterioration of the world economy as evidenced by the recession, the decrease in export prices, the increase in protectionism, the growing debt and the resulting structural adjustment programs, the primary focus became economic development (Maguire, 1984: 23; Moser, 1989: 1813).

With this general policy shift, the previous focus on women shifted to economic development. The efficiency approach recognized women as under utilized resources for development (Goetz, 1991: 139). The assumption was that women's status would increase with their economic participation. Women were integrated into the development process, a recipe known by critics as "add women and stir". The inequitable relations between men and women would change as women became full economic partners in development (Rathgeber, 1990: 452). These underlying tenets allowed organizations such as the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency to claim that increased economic participation would link efficiency and equity together (Moser, 1989: 1813).

The approach centres on ensuring efficient economic development and recognizes women as both economic producers and deliverers of social services. Women are targeted for participation in income generating schemes and employment. The assumption is that access to income will motivate women to juggle their time to participate in yet another activity (Rathgeber, 1990: 452). The approach relies on the

elasticity of women's labour in reproductive and community manager roles to provide for nutrition, education and health care-responsibilities that governments no longer meet due to their adherence to structural adjustment programs. For example, compensatory projects endorsed by UNICEF such as communal kitchens and direct feeding programs are designed to increase women's capability as delivery agents (Cornia, Jolly & Stewart, 1987).

Although the triple burden carried by women in their roles as reproducers, producers and community managers has been documented, the negative impact of structural adjustment on women is not acknowledged by the 'efficiency approach'. Practical gender interests are met at the cost of longer working hours and increased unpaid work due to the decrease in resource allocations. In most cases, the approach has failed to reach strategic gender needs (Moser, 1989: 1814). With its emphasis on efficient economic development, the approach neglects the reproductive and community needs of women: "women's issues" will not be addressed until countries get their "economic houses back in order".

'Empowerment Approach'

The 'empowerment approach' differs greatly from the Equity, Anti-Poverty and Efficiency approaches. Derived from Southern feminist analyses and grassroots organizing, it is rooted in the identity of Southern women. It questions the very role of development itself, the socio-economic structures on which it is built and the need for

Southern countries to be integrated into Northern designed development (Moser, 1989: 1815). It sees the struggle for women's equality as intricately linked to the political liberation of all people (Mblinyi, 1987: 108; Meer, 1987: 20). The approach strives to enable women to gain more autonomy and control over their lives, recognizes that they are agents of their own development, and ensures that women make and exercise their own choices and set their own agendas (Elson, 1991b: 13).

The 'empowerment approach' addresses the structural causes of poverty and strives to eliminate the many oppressions suffered by women and other marginal populations at the hand of patriarchy, imperialism and neo-colonialism. Throughout the world, women suffer a multitude of oppressions based on the intersection of their gender, race, class, sexuality, geographical location, ethnicity, religion, age, etc. Many Southern feminists contend that in the South, women's gender oppression is very much tied to their experience of other oppressions. A gender-based analysis alone could never describe their oppression. In fact, most poor women in the South do not see their oppression as a result of their gender.

Instead, for example, most poor women in the South see themselves first as poor and then as women-- their subordination is a result of their class and ethnicity etc. For instance, for a black woman, sexual discrimination exists but it is offset by the fact that the status of white men and women is infinitely higher than that of black men. This invalidates an exclusively anti-male movement but legitimates a black movement (Meer,

1987: 20). This lends support to the belief that the source of oppression experienced by women in the South "cannot be limited or perhaps even primarily attributed to gender alone" (Johnson-Odim, 1991: 318). According to Marie Angelique Savane, past President of the Association of African Women Organized for Research and Development (AAWORD):

For although the oppression of women is universal in nature... It is time to move beyond simple truisms about the situation of women to a more profound analysis of the mechanisms perpetuating the subordination of women in society...In the Third World, women's demands have been explicitly political, with work, education and health as major issues per se and not so linked to their specific impact on women. In addition, women of the Third World perceive imperialism as the main enemy on their continents and especially of women...(Savane, 1982 cited in Johnson-Odim, 1991: 319).

The 'empowerment approach' acknowledges the diversity of women's oppression. For example, both an elite woman and a poor working class woman experience forms of oppression based on gender but their actual experience of oppression varies depending on their complex construction of identity (i.e. class, race, ethnicity) which in turn will affect their survival strategies (Parpart, 1991: 14). "Systems of racial, class, and gender domination do not have identical effects on women in third world contexts" (Mohanty, 1991: 13).

The objectives of the 'empowerment approach' are informed by some Southern feminist analyses and are succinctly stated by the organization Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN), as illustrated in chapter one. At the core of DAWN's

concept of feminism is a process of economic and social development geared to human needs through wider control over access to economic and political power (Sen & Grown, 1987).

The 'empowerment approach' strives to meet both practical and strategic gender needs and to improve both women's condition and position in society. Although previous approaches had marginally improved women's economic status and assisted them in coping with socio-economic problems, the strategies did little to provide an enabling environment for women to become empowered. The 'empowerment approach' seeks to assist women in increasing their control, decision-making, self reliance and internal strength. According to Sara Hlupekile Longwe, a consultant and activist for women's rights based in Lusaka:

...the central issue of women's development is women's empowerment to enable women to take an equal place with men, and to participate equally in the development process in order to achieve control over the factors of production on an equal base with men (Longwe, 1991: 150).

Consciousness raising is an essential component of empowerment. It creates a critical mind that informs the reality of individuals:

Individuals not only understand their society and the place they currently have in it, but that they undertake efforts to modify social relations (Stromquist, 1988: 12).

Taking into account all aspects of women's reproductive, productive and community oriented work both within and outside of the household, the 'empowerment approach' links the relations of production to relations of reproduction. Women are seen as

architects and agents of change rather than passive recipients and they are recognized for their right to make choices in life (Moser, 1989: 1815). Their many roles as wives, mothers, teachers, farmers, sellers, doctors and nutritionists are all important contributions and central to economic development:

...the research generated by the Decade showed that women were not "outside" development. Indeed, to many activists and practitioners alike it was becoming increasingly clear that women's contribution was central to "development", the very base on which development was constructed, but in a way that was deeply exploitative of their time, labour both paid (in the workplace) and unpaid (in the household), and their sexuality (Antrobus, 1989: 27).

Supporters of the approach criticize the belief that women need to be integrated into "productive roles":

For poor Third World Women are the people who do more than two-thirds of the work in their countries; they are the people who are responsible for meeting the basic needs of most of the people in this world... Their central role in human survival therefore places them at the centre of the balance between population and land, reproduction and production, between sustainable development and ecological disaster, between a more humane world and one which denies a common humanity to the majority of the world's population (Antrobus, 1989: 26).

The goal of empowerment is not pursued at the expense of basic needs. Instead, practical and strategic needs are linked (Elson, 1991a: 193). Programs that address practical needs in the specific context of health, nutrition, education and economics serve as sites for meeting strategic needs and empowering women. Program objectives may vary from the provision of employment opportunities to the meeting of basic nutritional needs. The essential part of the process is that the activities provide women with the opportunity to come together to share experiences, to understand the social and political

structures that have been the cause of their malnutrition or unemployment and to participate in planning their development as they define it.

This is endorsed by Shanthi Dairiam, a Malaysian activist who works with women's organizations particularly in the areas of violence against women and reproductive rights, with the object of influencing mainstream national planning. At the conference, *Linking Hands: Women's Rights as Human Rights* she stated:

This process should enable women to provide support for one another and to gain the collective strength needed to gradually challenge oppressive gender and class relations (Dairiam, 1992).

Sara Longwe (1991) offers a model that addresses the achievement of women's empowerment. The model, consisting of five different levels or criteria arranged in hierarchical fashion on a continuum, illustrates the link between practical and strategic needs. The meeting of material welfare on the lowest rung (i.e. access to food supply, income and medical care) is one step on the path to empowerment, located on the highest rung.

The emphasis of the 'empowerment approach' is on the agency of organized women more so than on the role of development agencies (Elson, 1991b). The 'empowerment approach' recognizes the importance of women's groups in building constituencies of women to challenge social conventions which prevent women from exercising their rights. Aware of the limits of top-down legislation, they seek to mobilize women from below to form political pressure groups to lobby for policy change and action (Moser,

1989: 1816-1817). Women's organizations serve as rallying sites for the women's movement by providing a place for women to meet and work together on issues that are close to their everyday lives (Sen & Grown, 1987: 89). They tend to be more concerned with process than with outcome and are committed to an internal style of organization that is deliberately anti-bureaucratic and hostile to formal rules. More egalitarian than hierarchical, they strive "to empower their members to do collectively that which they could not do alone" (Ferguson, 1984: 189-190).

An important strategy that women's groups are using to support themselves, others, and the international women's movement is the building of alliances of women or constituencies of women in every region, country, community and organization to provide a space where there can be dialogue about the meaning of development, "how it can be furthered in the societies that we have now, and what kind of a world women want in terms of human relationships and structures" (Heyzer, 1985: xxix).

These structural alliances have the potential of cutting across different women's organizations and political affiliations and can lead to the growth of a broad based local, national and global movement (Sen & Grown, 1987: 87). A broad civil movement of women is necessary to constantly push for change:

There is a need to have a constituency of women who will not only make demands for their rights (ie. right to guardianship, health, property, choose one's partner) but who will also remain in place to add pressure to see that these rights even if they are given theoretically are and will continue to be implemented (Dairiam, interview, 1992).

Constituencies of women in both the South and the North are needed to challenge inequalities that face women around the world. Networks are needed right across the board "to work separately for themselves and to work together on some common things" (Dairiam, interview, 1992).

Northern women need a visible constituency to fight for their own rights in their own countries and communities (ie. violence against women, sexual harassment, reproductive rights). Additionally, their constituencies can press for systemic changes in the international political economy by lobbying their governments and international bodies for changes to policies and conditions that negatively impact the South:

You need constituencies of women, not only in the South, but you need constituencies of women in the North who will be aware of the negative effects for people in the South that result from structural adjustment, trade policies, and who will link hands with the women of the South to fight for some of these things (Dairiam, interview, 1992).

Moreover, women in the North, from both within and from outside agencies, are pressuring donor organizations to provide more resources to support women in the South.

Women's groups are also attempting to influence the media for "the media and the field of communication are probably the most powerful expressions of change" (Anonymous a, 1992: 28). For example, Maria Suarez, a dynamic grassroots activist, runs a short wave radio programme called Radio Peace International, Feminista, that is heard throughout Latin America. Access to mass media enables communication with donor agencies and

civil society at large. It is a channel for communicating what women's groups are doing. It can serve as a base from which to build an international network and constituency of women (Suarez, interview, 1992).

The politically challenging nature of the 'empowerment approach' and its underlying feminist philosophy have caused development organizations and governments to stay clear of embracing elements of empowerment since it demands commitment to structural change and power shifts. Despite the widespread international growth of women's organizations that embrace an empowerment philosophy, women's groups continue to be underfunded and supported by voluntary, unpaid women. The approach has yet to be endorsed officially in policy except by a few international non-governmental organizations; one example is the MATCH International Centre (Moser, 1989: 1817). MATCH is "the only Canadian international development organization which works exclusively with and for women in the South and Canada on development issues which reflects their lives" (MATCH, 1991). Their global philosophy is grounded in the following:

Women everywhere are confronted with barriers designed to block them from contributing economically, socially and politically to the development of their community. Their contribution, when made, is often devalued and goes unacknowledged. In addition, women are forced to live with violence, poverty and landlessness - problems which cannot be eradicated unless women are actively involved in the creation and implementation of the solutions (MATCH, 1991).

MATCH supports three main program areas to reach their objectives: Eliminating Violence Against Women, Gender and Development and Words of Women -- the latter

strives to create opportunities for the sharing of women's thoughts, ideas and beliefs.

Conclusion

While most multilateral and bilateral agencies, governments and non-governmental organizations have been influenced to adopt some sort of policy and strategy in working with women, the overwhelming majority have not endorsed the 'empowerment approach' and women have remained marginal to development policy and practice. Elements of the 'welfare approach' and more recently of the 'efficiency approach' make up the predominant frameworks in use today. However, such approaches ignore the imbalances of power between the North and South, men and women, rich and poor, and do not question the fundamental inequities of the world system nor the social construction of gender (Kardam, 1991).

In response to these criticisms and in recognition of the ongoing and increased disadvantage of women since the International Decade for Women, some NCOs are shifting their focus from women and their exclusion from development initiatives (due to a lack of training, income, and other inadequacies) to the relations of inequality between men and women:

We have learned that isolated, marginalized women's projects or even the integration of women into larger projects will not change women's subordination or enable women to join men as "agents" of development. We need more sophisticated strategies based on a holistic social/gender analysis if our development work is to contribute to the building of more equal societies (CCIC, AQOCI & MATCH, 1991: 6).

This new orientation of work, termed Gender and Development (GAD), is based on notions of empowerment and focuses on the unequal power relations of men and women through an exploration of the gender division of labour, the differing roles of men and women and the differing needs arising from these roles. Addressing both women's condition and position, GAD seeks to meet women's practical and strategic needs through people-centred development (CCIC, 1991: 76). The underlying objectives include the transformation of unequal gender relations, the empowerment of women and men and the creation of an equal partnership between women and men to determine and direct a collective future (CCIC et al, 1991: 6).

These NGOs, that are recognizing the importance of a gendered approach, are attempting to better understand and meet the needs in the South by providing an enabling environment for women and men to become empowered. They are attempting to improve their relationships with Southern men and women in order to better their development efforts. The next chapter will provide an overview of the work of Northern NGOs and their approaches to development. It will explore the relationships that have evolved between Northern NGOs and Southern women.

Chapter 3

Constructing Empowering Relations: The Case of Northern NGOs

If you have come to help me, then you are wasting your time but if your liberation is caught up with mine, then let us both work together (an Aboriginal woman, Australia, in Fulavai, 1986: 19).

Introduction

Compared to multilateral and bilateral agencies, NGOs occupy an alternative place in the international development community. They describe themselves as organizations that address the underlying causes of underdevelopment instead of merely relieving the symptoms of poverty (Korten, 1990b). This trend to provide alternative models has broadened opportunities for women, as it has for men (Yudelman, 1987: 180). In theory, their underlying philosophy makes NGOs appropriate agents for bringing about social transformations in gender relations within their organizations, operations and overseas work.

Trends in NGO Focus

The belief in local participation and small scale community based development underlies the work of most NGOs. They aim to bridge the gap between top-down development strategies and the capabilities of communities and local organizations by advocating participatory development. Ideally, they see development as a process whereby the central task is not a simple transfer of financial resources but rather the development of human and institutional will and capacity (Korten, 1990b). They strive to uncover and strengthen local capabilities by dealing with people and institutions through which

people relate to one another (Brodhead, Herbert-Copley & Lambert, 1988; Clark, 1991):

The core of any development process is its actors. Recognizing the centrality of people in projects is not a matter of simple rhetoric but the key issue of the development paradigm. It has decisive implications upon the project's preparation, strategy and resource allocation. Models for development projects that do not put people first clash with the model intrinsic to the real social process of development (Cernea, 1991: i).

NGOs have "pursued an approach rooted in their own ethical and philanthropic traditions and conditioned by their position as outsiders -- bit players in terms of resources and power" (Brodhead et al, 1988: 6). This approach was adopted not to solely avoid the paternalism and assumptions of superiority often attributed to aid givers, but rather to overcome the practical limitations of small budgets and staff and uncertain funding. As Tim Brodhead, Brent Herbert-Copley and Anne-Marie Lambert write:

Consequently, they preferred small-scale, often isolated or even scattered projects; they sought a contribution from the indigenous community, both to demonstrate community support and to keep costs low; and they encouraged local initiative in originating projects, both because their own management tended to be somewhat loose and because, over time, confident and trusting relationships developed between 'donors' and 'recipients' (Brodhead et al, 1988: 6)

In their struggle for social change, NGOs are better positioned to address concerns of the poor. Since the majority of the world's poor are women, NGOs are more receptive to addressing problems of poor women. Due to their direct links with grassroots organizations they often have better insight into the most appropriate kinds of programming (Drabek, 1987: ix). Their tendency to be small and dynamic makes them more flexible and innovative than the larger bureaucratic aid agencies (Buvinic, 1989: 1046). Instead of working on large scale regional and national projects, NGOs are more

likely to support small local level pilot projects outside of the modern economy where women's productivity is concentrated (Buvinic, 1989: 1049).

As the international NGO community is made up of organizations of great diversity, NGOs are not homogeneous in their approach towards and activities with women in the South. Canadian NGOs have differing analyses of the problems surrounding development and have adopted various approaches and activities to resolve these problems (Brodhead et al, 1988; Korten, 1990b). The emphasis that an individual NGO chooses ultimately impacts on how an NGO views and approaches women.

The origins of Canadian NGO activity in Southern countries are tied to early missionary efforts that occurred after World War II. Relief of human suffering was combined with pastoral work (Herbert-Copley, 1987: 21). Influenced by their missionary history, many Canadian NGOs have been set up to provide assistance to those less fortunate. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many refugee and relief agencies delivering welfare services to alleviate the suffering of men and women in the South were created in Canada.

Charitable relief organizations are known to equate development with economic growth and progress. Their programs focus on meeting immediate needs through direct provision of food, health care, shelter or education. Since women are overrepresented in the poorer groups, relief programming often targets women. Relief organizations rely

on women volunteers from the middle and upper class to distribute the aid and women's groups become organized as efficient and cost-effective clearinghouses. Back in the 1950s, mother's clubs were created to take on the important distributional role in developing countries (Buvinic, 1986: 658).

Organizations that embrace the 'welfare approach' gear their development education to provide descriptive and factual information to inform Canadians about the face of poverty in the southern countries (Brodhead et al, 1988: 3). Often, the images are denigrating and reinforce the portrayal of a rich, powerful North and a poor powerless South. NGOs use pictures of starving children and natural and human disasters to obtain money and support for their charitable work.

With the introduction of the 'basic needs approach' in the 1970s, NGOs began to challenge the assumptions underlying economic growth. With economic progress of the industrialized countries faltering, questions about the viability of the Northern industrial model for the North itself and for the rest of the world were being raised. Recognizing the level of need in the South, development organizations began to more adequately incorporate basic needs into their policies and planning. At the same time, informal and formal Southern organizations such as community self help groups, producer cooperatives and peasant associations were demanding a greater say in determining the objectives of development. In response to these demands and the sheer magnitude of human poverty, NGOs established programs to address the structural problems of

poverty and underdevelopment.

Many NGOs embrace the community development approach and support both longer term development and small, self-contained projects that strengthen capacities for self-reliance. They lend support to preventative health projects, the improvement of farming practices, and the building of local infrastructure. Some incorporate WID initiatives such as income generating projects and other employment initiatives (Brodhead et al, 1988; Korten, 1990b).

As overseas programming shifted from relief and welfare to address the structural causes of poverty, NGOs have focused the educational work in Canada to a more critical analysis of the structural causes of poverty and underdevelopment and the interdependence of the North and the South (Brodhead et al, 1988: 7).

The process of change continued into the 1980s with the reexamination of basic strategic issues related to sustainability, impact and cost recovery. Instead of serving as service deliverers at the local level, NGOs took on a more strategic, catalytic, foundation-like role, collaborating with local change agents by providing resources but ensuring the Southern groups' autonomy and decision-making power (Brodhead et al, 1988; Murphy, 1991). Not seeing projects as ends in themselves but as part of a longer-range sustainable process, the key activity became empowerment. The role of the Northern NGO was to try to break down the external structures that obstructed local level

development by persuading institutions (i.e. Northern governments, government aid agencies, multilateral agencies, media) to bring about real, lasting change. Some NGOs shifted their work from "women's issues" and WID to an analysis of gender and GAD (Cardinal, Costigan & Heffernan, 1989).

The Partnership Strategy

Origins

By the 1980s the number of strong Southern organizations had increased (Landim, 1987; Nyoni, 1987). Many had developed as offshoots of their Northern counterparts, others as middle class charities and others under the influence of development activists in the local communities (i.e. women's organizations). As these locally based Southern groups gained sophistication, they demanded more autonomy and control over the design and delivery of aid programs and insisted that Northern organizations redefine their role and demonstrate their relevance (Murphy, 1991). They forcefully asserted that development in the South was their responsibility (Drabek, 1987: x). Instead of being subjected to manipulations from the North, they wanted control over their destinies (PAC, 1989: 8):

Northern NGOs must become familiar with development struggles in their own societies, confront political and other constraints to development in the South which originate in the policies of bilateral and multilateral institutions controlled by the North, and work together with Southern partners to redress the power imbalance in their relationships (CCIC, 1990: 5).

In response to these demands, the "partnership strategy" was designed by some Northern NGOs that were most concerned about their relationships with Southern

groups. Aware of the limitations of conventional development strategies and the need to better meet regional and community needs, these NGOs turned to improving collaboration with Southern groups. Over time, Southern groups had become more attractive to Northern organizations and linkages between the two had grown. The locally based groups were more familiar with socio-political norms, had greater linguistic and cultural affinity and were more cost effective (Brodhead et al, 1988: 4). The linkages assisted those NGOs that practised the empowerment approach to facilitate the strategy of participation and self-reliance.

Although collaboration between Northern and Southern groups had existed for decades, Northern NGOs were seeking to deepen it in order to replace previous dependence, mistrust and paternalism (Drabek, 1987: x). Northern NGOs were "beginning to define a new balance between overseas project work, building public awareness in Canada, and advocating suitable policies for a more just, sustainable future" (Brodhead et al, 1988: 146):

What might be new about linkages in the 1980s is realizing that this kind of twinning between groups in developed and developing nations can play an important role in the larger context of North-South relationships (Tapper, 1986: 12).

Elements

Although there is no specific treatment that will change a North-South relationship into a partnership, it appears that there are a number of elements that will produce a successful one (Fowler, 1992: 20; Diamond, 1990: 214; Christie, 1991; Steering Committee,

1988). The World Development/Overseas Development Institute Symposium held in London in Spring 1986 suggested that partnerships should include the following:

mutual respect, trust and equality; transparency or reciprocal accountability; understanding of each others' political/ economic and cultural contexts and of institutional constraints; openness to learning from each other; and a long term commitment to working together (Drabek, 1987: x).

Similarly, Partnership Africa Canada referred to partnership as the "sharing of power, resources, information and experience based on equitable arrangements regarding trust, accountability and exchanges" (PAC, 1989: 12).

The term partnership implies a whole new pattern of North-South relations. Rather than a simple transfer of funds, partnerships imply giving and receiving by both groups. The local Southern NGO is no longer seen as simply the recipient of funds but rather a partner in the process of development (Herbert-Copley, 1987: 27). Financial transfers represent only one type of interaction between the groups (PAC, 1989). The transfer of capital becomes less central as the groups seek to restore a balance of resources between Northern and Southern organizations (Korten, 1987; Vincent & Campbell, 1990).

Partnerships are embedded in an ideological perspective that recognizes problems of development as a global struggle for economic, political and social justice (Christie, 1991; PAC, 1989: 14). By working for a common cause, both groups develop a common vision and struggle that ultimately makes them interdependent (Johnson, interview, 1993). Partnership becomes the uniting force linking development work in the South and public

awareness activities in the North to promote justice and human interdependence (CCIC, 1992; Christie, 1991):

By creating stronger ties with social movements in Canada and therefore demonstrating a willingness to fight against poverty in the North as well as the South, Northern NGOs can increase their credibility with Southern partners. Relationships can be strengthened if Northern NGOs focus on development policy and advocate for change in policies of governments and international institutions (based on input from Southern partners). Through all of these efforts, Northern groups would be showing a desire for solidarity with the South (CCIC, 1992: 2).

Collaborative efforts between peoples' organizations and social movements in the North and the South create a constituency that can lobby against broader public policy (Murphy, 1986). This process of solidarity becomes "one link in the system of civic affiliations that are needed to increase hope for equitable and sustainable development" (Fowler, 1992: 22).

Partnerships advocate a delegation of power, responsibility and accountability. Decision-making processes are designed so decisions are shared by both parties from project ideas, design, implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Joint decision-making processes ensure reciprocity, trust and mutuality and the consideration of issues such as who benefits, who makes decisions, who holds what power. The need for such structures is illustrated by Partnership Africa Canada (PAC), a consortium of African and Canadian NGOs. PAC expanded its board of directors in 1988 to include African NGO representatives after the major criticism in its first two years of work was the lack of African participation in decision-making (Mennie, 1988). The transformation of this decision-making body increased the likelihood that the partnership was accountable to

not only Canadian donors and the Canadian public, but the African communities and constituents as well.

Partnerships are designed on institutional structures and values that both organizations espouse (Korten, 1987). Effective communication systems (i.e. telephones, faxes) and mechanisms (i.e. decision-making by consensus) are essential to ensure an ongoing flow of information, feedback, ideas, views and experiences. A code of conduct is useful to set parameters for both groups (Drabek, 1987: xiv).

Institutional strengthening is an essential ingredient of a partnership. Partnership relations can assist Southern groups to increase their credibility and capabilities through the building of infrastructure, the design of research systems and analytic capacities to support administration, staffing and communications (PAC, 1989: 16). The long term goal is to support the group to a level so that it will survive even if the partnership is phased out (CCIC, 1992).

Partnerships need time to develop (PAC, 1989: 12). Based on long term programs and relationships, they seek to replace the short term dependent relationship resulting from conventional development strategies. Personal involvement and dedication of the member groups are essential (Christie, 1991).

Within the last decade, there have been concerted efforts by analysts and practitioners

to understand and better the strategy of partnership. Many conferences with representatives of Southern and Northern organizations have been held. The Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC) held a conference in May 1990 called The North South Dialogue, NGOs in the 1990s to identify a common North/South agenda for the next decade, to explore the evolution of partnership and to examine mechanisms of cooperation. The meeting gave representatives from Canada, Asia, Europe, Africa, South America, Central America and the Caribbean an opportunity to discuss their impressions of partnership. As well, Partnership Africa Canada in 1989 undertook a research project to determine how Canadian NGOs experienced partnership with African groups. The result was a comprehensive evaluation of Canadian NGO partnerships consisting of surveys and interviews with Canadian PAC member agencies and a sampling of Canadian NGO projects and programs (CCIC, 1990a; PAC, 1989).

Discussions have also been held at the international policy level. At the UNCED Geneva Environment and Development Consultation in March of 1990, the following roles were suggested for Northern NGOs: they have a responsibility to educate Northern constituents on the impact of Northern attitudes, policies and practices towards the South; they should provide policy analysis and advocacy with the Northern governments, and monitor development activities and assistance; they should shift their work from short term projects to policy; through their local and global work, they should take advantage of the opportunities to link local, national and global issues by building networks and movements at the local, regional and global levels (CCIC, 1990b).

As well, government agencies are discussing the necessity for partnership in their work. In a recent document circulated in CIDA, partnership was considered a central theme of the Canadian government's strategy for international development; partnership could assist Canadians in building more equitable relations with peoples in Southern countries.

The discussion paper referred to partnership as a process that:

requires an on-going commitment, acceptance of shared contributions which may be dissimilar in nature, predetermined distribution of risk, and recognition of mutual needs and benefits...The key to development is the strengthening of a broad band of Third World institutions-public, private and voluntary- and the most effective means of doing so is recognized as enhancing the linkages and fostering partnerships between Canadian institutions and their Third World counterparts (CIDA, 1992: 2).

Limitations to the 'Partnership Strategy'

The recognition by Northern organizations of the need for a shift in strategy has led to the proliferation of material on North/ South partnership. However, after a decade of talking and trying to practise partnership, much of the work remains theoretical and difficult to practice. There is the "difficulty of bridging the gap between the concept of partnership and the reality of partnership as an organizing principle of NGO work" (Brodhead et al, 1988: 141). Most of the linkages Canadian NGOs have established with Southern groups are based solely on funding with little exchange of experience, information or skill (Brodhead et al, 1988: 132). Most Canadian NGOs are using the term 'partner' interchangeably with 'the groups we fund' (MATCH, 1992: 1).

The majority of NGOs that have adopted partnership to describe their relationships are not resolving the contradictions and injustices characterizing past aid relationships.

Many NGOs are failing to recognize the complexity of the North/ South relationship. Their relations are glossing over the inequities that exist between the North and South and between groups of people that differ in terms of gender, race, class, and ethnicity.

Other NGOs are attempting to address the asymmetry of power underlying a North/South partnership. They are, however, having difficulty overcoming the significant North/South power relationship which is reinforced by the funding base of Northern NGOs. Since Northern organizations have more access to development resources than Southern groups, a disproportionate weight is assigned to the objectives of the Northern group. They become over-involved in the activities of the Southern organizations for instance, financial management, day to day operations, and the establishment of goals and objectives. This ultimately creates an atmosphere of paternalism and dependence. No amount of well-intentioned dialogue may actually be able to remove this (Elliott, 1987: 65). Although responsibilities can be shared, it is difficult to share power and authority:

In spite of good intentions, both regions are still caught in the web of the old relationship. On both sides, some very hard lessons have to be learned. Linkage [partnership] has to be seen not just as a means of working together but also as a mechanism in the process for social restructuring, for change (Tapper, 1986: 12).

Although most NGOs espouse a model of development that strives for social change, few are satisfactorily working to eliminate the forms of domination that reinforce oppressions suffered by the poor in Southern communities. This has great implications

for women from the South:

Women are consistently structurally marginalized world wide by male-dominated power structures, in the same way that the under-classes, and poor nations, are marginalized by the dominant ones (Christie, 1991: 6).

Feminist Critique

Rather than being based on Southern analyses, the partnership strategy has been based on the ethnocentric and androcentric concepts, classifications and values of Northern development activists and practitioners. Northern male biases, at the foundation of the strategy, are a general reflection of NGO's incapacity to incorporate gender and notions of empowerment into all aspects of their work.

Although many NGOs declare in their mission statements and policies that women are a priority, few have taken concrete action to increase women's participation and to introduce a women's standpoint into their work. In a recent study of NGO policy statements and other documentation, it was revealed that forty per cent of Canadian NGOs are gender blind and fail to notice that their work has differential impact on women and men (Plewes & Stuart, 1992).

Many NGOs fail to differentiate the needs, roles, activities, constraints and capabilities of women and men in their work. Beneficiaries are viewed as people, not as men and women (Plewes & Stuart, 1992: 16). Others may recognize and address women's needs by supporting projects that contain elements from the Women in Development approach, however they fail to incorporate a gender sensitive approach in their work.

These organizations fail to support an approach that strives to transform gender relations.

Organizations like MATCH International and Inter Pares have acknowledged the importance of orienting policies and practices towards gender relations. They have instituted gender aware policies and training and have adapted their work to address the subordination of women relative to men. In their attempts to increase the impact of their work with women, they have struck relationships with Southern women's groups. These essential contacts provide expert consultants, appropriate advice, and supportive channels and means to achieve gender policy goals (Plewes & Stuart, 1990: 15). However, this attention to women's needs through the adoption of a gender sensitive approach has not spilled over to the NGO community as a whole (Brodhead et al, 1988; Plewes & Stuart, 1992).

Most Northern NGOs are not comfortable venturing into the sphere of gender relations. They do not want to interfere with cultural, social and religious norms of a country by imposing their beliefs about gender. Those NGOs willing to support women in some way are more likely to support either the 'welfare approach' or 'efficiency approach'. Their projects are based on an objectified woman in her "traditional role" and their approaches do not support programs that enable women to become empowered to challenge systemic gender inequities. A CCIC study conducted in 1985 found that 70 per cent of Canadian NGOs supported activities related to women (Latremouille, 1985).

6). However, a later evaluation of NGO programs carried out by CIDA revealed "a strong tendency for most of their projects to be in the field of social welfare, home economics, child care & nutrition, or in the narrow range of jobs stereotyped as being good for women only" (CIDA, 1986: 87).

This may be partly related to the fact that the majority of decision makers are male and are not committed to women's rights (Plewes & Stuart, 1992). Research shows that action for poor women is "conditional on an assessment that an investment in women will not affect or cut back on development investments in poor men" (Buvillac, 1986). The failure to address gender relations can also be attributed to the fact that NGOs, especially the female staff, fear Southern groups may interpret their intervention as a cultural imposition and accuse them of cultural imperialism (Plewes, 1992).

Conclusion

The principles of partnership provide the potential for designing and practising a more equal relationship between Northern NGOs and Southern groups. However, as noted above, thus far, the strategy has failed to sufficiently address ethnocentric and male-biased assumptions. A consequence of this has been the almost total disregard for a gendered analysis and the importance of using notions of empowerment to eliminate forms of domination that oppress women and men throughout the developing and developed countries.

The marginalization of women in the South in development projects and planning and the lack of gender analyses in partnership discussions and practices are linked to NGOs' incapacity to incorporate gender into all aspects of their work. To understand the reasons why more NGOs have not endorsed a gender aware approach, it is useful to explore NGO's organizational behaviour. The next chapter will examine the ethnocentric and male biases embedded in the structures and operations of Northern NGOs: biases that inhibit the adoption of a gender sensitive and fully equitable approach and interfere with the provision of enabling environments for women's empowerment.

Chapter 4

Organizational Constraints of Northern NGOs

Male bias has been built into development institutions, processes and policies, and even if all new programs were placed overnight on a foundation of equal access for all, regardless of gender, the momentum of unequal processes already in operation would remain very powerful (Rogers, 1979: 44).

Introduction

Development theory and practice is full of ethnocentric and male-biased assumptions that have created categories and concepts that discriminate against women on the basis of their gender, race, class, ethnicity and geographical location. These conceptual biases have distorted the reality of women's lives, needs, and interests.

The assumptions underlying the value loaded interventions of development have been created and reinforced by a Northern male ideology that accepts the superiority of men and the North. This ideology has become entrenched in the organizational structure and operations of Northern NGOs and has had serious negative implications for women in the South and their relationships with Northern donors.

This chapter provides an extensive critique of NGOs' organizational structures and operations; it is framed around the standpoints expressed in the writings of and interviews with Southern women⁶.

⁶ So as not to "appropriate" the voices of Southern women, most of their ideas are expressed in their own words, in quotes.

Staffing Structures

There appears to be a Northern male bias existing in many Canadian NGOs. This is reflected in the composition of staff within the typical NGO. In most cases the decision makers are male, middle class and white. Naturally, their belief systems are based on their identity and their backgrounds. The following discussion will demonstrate how this is problematic for Southern women.

An organization is guided by the beliefs of the individuals who are making the decisions. Based on their position and dedication to the organization, staff become committed to certain normative outlooks that affect the perspectives that they bring to decision-making (Staudt, 1985: 14):

Central to the planning process is the identification of the problem, the decision-making process and the information base that guide the making of decisions. This process does not take place in a vacuum but is influenced by the understanding policy-makers have of how societies function, by their vision of the future, by the policy making environment generated by the political, cultural and social systems of each country, and by groups sufficiently powerful to influence the direction of development decisions and the allocation of resources (Heyzer, 1985: xii-xiii).

How individual staff understand society's structures and the roles of men and women tend to bias their perceptions of women's needs and concerns:

Everyone is an expert on their own definitions of relationships between men and women, and the very depth of that experience leads to tendencies to generalize from it, however inaccurate or inappropriate to others' experiences, including other cultures (Staudt, 1985: 15).

Cecilia Medina Quiroga, Professor of International Human Rights Law at the Faculty of the Universidad Diego Portales in Santiago Chile observes:

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the values cherished by individuals influence their decisions; if the members of a supervisory body have not interiorized the value of the equality of the sexes, if this is not heartfelt, they will tend not to include women and their problems in the range of supervisory powers (Medina, 1992: 2).

Like other Canadian organizations, the decision-making positions in NGOs are most often held by men:

Male bias or male privilege⁷ is entrenched everywhere. It is entrenched in the legal system, it is entrenched in all kinds of bureaucracy, by that I mean donor bureaucracy by which I mean men have been in the field in the public sphere much longer than women have been and therefore they hold positions of power, important positions (Dairiam, interview, 1992).

It follows then that the **domination of men relative to women in the decision-making positions of NGOs reinforces and perpetuates gender inequality both in the Northern organizational structure and in their overseas operations.** This is particularly true if the decision-making positions are held by men that cling to "traditional" gender roles:

In a patriarchal society there is considerable political resistance to change which improves the position of women relative to men - and this resistance is likely to be equally pervasive in the government ministries [and NGOs] which have the responsibility to plan and implement projects in women's development. At best government ministries [and NGOs] tend to pay lip-service to the need for women's development, but in practice they have no understanding or intention of interpreting women's development in terms of improving the position of women relative to men (Longwe, 1992: 4).

⁷ Whether individual women and men are aware of it or not, men experience greater access to resources and benefits relative to men. This male privilege is institutionalized in social systems and institutions from governing bodies through to households and exists regardless of other social organizing principles such as race, class, religion (Keays, 1991: 3).

Evidence indicates that women might be more apt to challenge gender-blind and traditional Women in Development policies and approaches. Studies have shown that female staff in NGOs are more likely than men to criticize projects because of their potential negative impact on women (Plewes & Stuart, 1992). Also, women are more likely to address Southern women's needs and are more likely to initiate activities pertaining to women and gender issues (Plewes & Stuart, 1992). However, the hiring and internal advancement procedures within Northern organizations present barriers that limit women's decision-making and their ability to influence gender policies and practices.

A general survey of the Canadian NGO community revealed that in 1984, women were over represented in support staff positions (representing 85 per cent of such positions) compared to holding only 38 per cent of the management positions. Although more women were in management positions in 1991 than five years earlier, they tended to be running smaller agencies. The larger the agency, the lower the participation of women as members of the Board of Directors (Plewes & Stuart, 1992). Women were also under represented in field staff positions and in the local Southern organizations with whom Northern organizations were working (Brodhead et al, 1988: 130).

This is not to argue that if the doors are wide open and women are granted greater access that gender inequality will be eliminated. It does suggest, however, that more women in decision-making positions is one of the many steps needed to transform

gender relations.

Putting women in decision making positions will not necessarily assist Southern women. **Some Southern feminists contend that neither men nor women from the North can understand nor properly address the concerns of Southern women.** In Canada, since the WID policy was implemented in CIDA, many Northern feminists working in NGOs have made attempts to meet the needs of Southern women. Most often their approaches have reflected their own understanding of women's situation, an experience that tends to be Northern, privileged, middle class and white. They are criticized by many Southern women for placing their own experiences at the centre of a broad range of women's experiences, a centre from which they evaluate and make peripheral the experiences of all other women, and especially Southern women (Amos & Parmar, 1984; hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1991). In contrast to their own self representation as educated, modern, and having control over their bodies and sexualities and decisions (Mohanty, 1988: 65), Northern women have characterized Southern women in the context of underdevelopment, oppressive traditions, high illiteracy, rural and urban poverty, religious fanaticism and overpopulation (Mohanty, 1991: 7).

Many Southern feminists challenge those Northern feminists who have come to view women's oppression in a straightforward, dichotomous way where patriarchy is seen as the form of power relations pitting men and women in direct oppositional struggle and determining, indeed defining the essential nature of women's oppression (Amos &

Parmar, 1984; Bannerji, 1991:67; Parikh, 1992). They argue that Northern women's privileged standpoint, has allowed them to assume that patriarchy organizes all other relations in society; that race, class, and sexuality as organizing principles are somehow subordinate or of lesser relevance (Parikh, 1992). Northern women have been criticized for their ethnocentric bias illustrated in their unwillingness to see connections between gender, race, class and cultural imperialism (Plewes & Stuart, 1990: 114).

Although many Northern feminists contend that their work is meant to assist Southern women, in most cases their analyses are reformist in nature and grounded in Women in Development thinking; they aim to alleviate problems associated with women's condition and practical gender needs while disregarding women's position relative to men and strategic gender needs.

The ethnocentric male assumptions upon which female and male staff base a lot of their decisions not only interferes with an NGOs endorsement of notions of empowerment, it also delegitimizes women's perceptions of what is valid. Southern women need to be supported to reclaim the value of their own experience, "to depict an experience different from the norm and to assert the value of this difference" (Narayan, 1989: 257):

It is critical that the agency of women through which women's perceptions of what is legitimate is transformed and that women provide the leverage to transform the prevailing social order (Dairiam, interview, 1992).

Hierarchical Structures

Another constraint that interferes with an NGO's linkage with Southern women is their tendency to be structured hierarchically. One might argue that most Northern NGOs are structured on hierarchical forms with a vertical decision-making process. Generally, such structures consist of a few dominant members who have more influence and control over the groups's goals and day to day operations than the larger number of lower level staff. Boards of directors and higher ranking employees of NGOs ultimately define the direction of the organization. As indicated above, often these decision makers are white middle class men.

Such a top-down power structure encourages staff to fall into line in support of the organization. Staff who constantly challenge the structure risk loss of respect or dismissal for not conforming to the organization's objectives as defined by the more powerful members (Ferguson, 1984).

This organizational structure has implications for the groups's relations with outside individuals and organizations. Top-down dominance creates and reinforces a dominant/subordinate relationship. This non-egalitarian structure is transferred into the relationships with outside organizations.

Assuming the position of control owing to their access to resources, Northern NGOs presume themselves experts of development and define project parameters for Southern

individuals and groups. In relation to the Northern expert, Southern men and women are objectified and categorized as powerless and subordinate (Ferguson, 1984: 88). They are given little control over their operations or the decision-making taking place with Northern NGOs. Development policy-making and planning becomes top-down as Northern organizations control the overall decision-making.

Ferguson contends that the political consequence of top-down dominance is that individuals can be forced to respond with submissive behaviour. In the context of the aid relationship, Southern men and women could be pressured by the power imbalance to learn dependency and submission (Ferguson, 1984: 166). Although Southern men and women might be strong, creative, and assertive in their own right, Northern organizations that control all or most of the decision-making may cause individuals to adopt roles and behaviours that both respond to and reinforce the unequal relationship. For instance, they could become non assertive, dependent, attentive, expressive and supportive, traits that Ferguson states are typically associated with femininity. Although these characteristics are not related to being biologically female, she argues that they are politically determined as females learn to play the role of the subordinate in social relations (Ferguson, 1984: 92). These behaviour patterns become self perpetuating as women and men are pressed to adopt coping strategies or as Ferguson terms them, strategies of "femininity" to ensure continued support and access to resources for their organizations and programs. This "feminisation of the beneficiary" is maintained by the structural requirements of the role itself:

As long as there are groups of people who hold institutionalized power over others, femininity will continue to be a trait that characterizes the subordinate populations, and the vision of a liberated community of autonomous individuals is denied (Ferguson, 1984: 122).

The behaviours and actions that result from top-down dominance are in direct contradiction to the goals of empowerment and autonomy, objectives that many feminist groups support and some NGOs are attempting to achieve.

Research Systems

The manner in which NGOs gather and analyze information about the lives of people in the South further inhibits their relationships with Southern women. In many cases, since research tends to inadequately and inaccurately document women's lives, it has considerable impact on the quantity and quality of support NGOs give women.

There is a close link between research, knowledge and development policy. The findings and analyses produced by researchers are transformed into knowledge. This knowledge is expressed in development discourse and is ultimately used as the base from which development policy is designed (Stamp, 1989).

Research and policy-making in international development have traditionally been the domain of white middle class Northern males. **The concepts and hypotheses have been designed from the perspective of these outside "experts" rather than from the perspective and reality of women's lives.** Much of the research about women has produced Southern women "as a field of knowledge" (Goetz, 1991: 143). The diversity

of women in terms of race, class, ethnicity and nationality has been neglected. Furthermore, the research has been descriptive and situational and merely observes women's subordination and exploitation. In a survey of the literature on women in Zambia, Sara Hlupekile Longwe found that research tended to focus on situational analysis:

...one is increasingly filled with the impression that an enormous amount is known about the situation of women in Zambia, but that little or nothing is being done to change the situation (Longwe, 1992: 3)

It was only in the 1970s that women's needs became recognized as being different from men's and that research on women's lives gained acceptance. However, there is still a general disregard for the incorporation of women into research. Research by and about women has little legitimacy in the eyes of many mainstream development researchers and practitioners. In many countries there is still very little information on women's day to day reality. Brigitte Mabandla is a legal advisor to the African National Congress at the Conference on a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). Referring to the situation in South Africa she states.

there is a very huge gap about information of women in my country... Nothing reliable has been done, no reliable research has been made in my country so that there is a lot of work to do (Mabandla, 1992: 7).

Many feminists are challenging the objective manner of researching women's lives (Harding, 1987; Kirby & McKenna, 1991; Mies, 1983; Shakakata, 1992). They claim that objective and neutral research produces invalid and unhelpful results since it is conducted in a top-down manner by "disinterested outsiders" and "mere observers" who

are not participants of the community. These objective researchers are often academics, sometimes activists and more often Western post-graduate students fulfilling their degrees (Longwe, 1992: 2). In most cases, these outside observers have no ideological commitment to their study since they believe that such a commitment will bias the research process and findings (Longwe, 1992). The results are usually reported to a Northern audience who are not involved in actions to change women's situations. The finished product is either inaccessible in the South (in Northern libraries) or tends to be written by outsiders in a language, style and vocabulary not understood by community members nor workers. There is a real paradox that exists in the area of research on international development. Longwe explains:

...researchers often have a good understanding of women's situation but are not involved in action to improve the situation; conversely, local NGOs are often involved in work to improve women's situation, but have little understanding of the problems and obstacles they face (Longwe, 1992: 7).

Funding Structures

NGO funding structures significantly shape the relations that evolve with Southern women. In most cases, these structures are rigid and impose considerable constraints on Southern groups. This is particularly true for Southern groups seeking to practice strategies of empowerment.

Like the counterpart organizations that they fund in the South, NGOs are dependent on outside funding. Most NGOs receive a good part of this financial support from the

Canadian public and from government sources. The Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA, is a major funder of NGOs. Since the agency works on a yearly budget basis, NGOs are forced to become part of their 12 month operating system. They receive funds annually and are responsible for submitting budgets and year end reports based on their work with Southern organizations and communities.

These constraints cause NGOs to transfer this way of operating onto their Southern counterparts. They tend to design and support small pilot projects that are relatively short term, from two to three years (Plewes & Stuart, 1992: 31). These initiatives often have a clear beginning, a clear end and a written report. In most cases they produce concrete end products that are easily measured by NGO monitoring systems. According to Honor Ford-Smith, past coordinator and tutor of Sistren, an independent theatre company working at advancing the awareness of the Jamaican public on questions affecting Caribbean women:

We were frequently required to present a project document which covered a short-term time frame and which promised to deliver a particular product or outcome at the end of a specified time frame (Ford-Smith, 1989: 64).

This method of operating has severe implications for Southern groups trying to foster empowerment. **It fails to provide support for the long term process of assisting women and men to take control of decisions that affect their lives.** According to Tina Johnson, of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), an organization in Barbados committed to understanding the relationship between the

oppression of women and other forms of exploitation and to working actively for change:

[Funders] are not so interested in process; they are more interested in something concrete which looks good in their annual report (Johnson, 1990: 32).

This is reinforced by Akua Kuenyehia, Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Ghana and founding and active member of the Steering Committee of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF):

...in trying to help our women build their own constituencies, set their priorities and so on, sometimes the activities that we indulge in do not really lend themselves to the kind of monitoring, time frames etc. that we have with donor money. ...sometimes the results are slow in coming...it is a long term thing ...we require a certain amount of flexibility which as far as I am concerned does not exist yet (Kuenyehia, 1992: 1).

Again this claim is endorsed by Marie-Aimee Helie-Lucas, an activist with Women Living Under Muslim Laws:

...social changes are long to induce and working towards such changes hardly allow to present a 'final product' to donors at the end of the year (Helie-Lucas, 1992: 6).

This funding structure is particularly inappropriate for supporting networks. Networks need sustained funding over many years to be effective. If they have end products to show for along the way, this only partially reflects their activities. Marie-Aimee Helie-Lucas is the International Coordinator of the Women Living Under Muslim Laws Network. Currently the network is compiling and comparing versions of Muslim Law enacted as family codes in some fifty countries, to determine whether these are religiously or culturally inspired. She claims that it is difficult "to fund for what it is has

to show, for its achievement is of qualitative nature, rather than quantitative nature" (Helie-Lucas, 1992: 6).

The type of support provided by most NGOs **does not assist groups to become independent and self sustaining in the long term.** NGOs are not so keen to provide institutional support for salaries or administrative overhead costs for running an office, for instance, renting office space or buying equipment (Helie Lucas, 1992; Dairiam, 1992). According to Tokunbo Ige, a human right's activist with the Legal Research and Resource Development Centre in Nigeria:

We are saying build our institutions as well because then we can do our own things for ourselves. Maybe the fear is that once we can build our own institutions they don't need us anymore (Ige, interview, 1992).

Asma Abdel Haleem is a legal scholar and activist from Sudan who has conducted research and devised strategies to confront the issue of female circumcision. She endorses this view:

Funders are not eager to fund you for infrastructure. They can give you a lot of money to type and to research 200 pages but they are not ready to give you money to buy a typewriter...why can't I tell a funder that I desperately need a typewriter. We desperately need a telephone line. Or we desperately need an old car to just go to the village that's about ten kilometres out of town (Haleem, 1992: 24)

Rather than supporting the long term growth and stability of a group, the short term project framework fosters dependency of Southern groups on international donors. This is extremely problematic for Southern groups as they are forced to continuously seek funding for small bits of their program thus preventing them "from putting into

place long term strategies for the organizations's growth and consolidation" (Ford-Smith, 1989: 65). This piecemeal approach to fund raising makes it difficult to make medium or long term plans (Drabek, 1987: xi). Organizations are constantly struggling to survive as they can never know if they are going to be afloat the next year. The uncertain future causes insecurity amongst the group and inhibits effective work and efficient management practices (Antrobus, 1987: 99). According to the Acting/Tutor of WAND, Women and Development Unit at the University of West Indies:

...we have the stress of going out to seek the funds we identify ourselves as needing. Because we are a grant-funded organization, this creates a level of insecurity among staff. We get only one year contracts and sometimes we can't even have that (Norma, 1988:10).

This fear is felt more intensely by young organizations as they are in a position of having to prove themselves to donors, to prove that their program is worthy of support.

In addition to all the above constraints, the decisions on who to fund are often based on criteria and priorities determined in the North. Many grassroots groups are unable to access funding since donors tend to support high exposure groups that are known in development circles. These groups tend to be made up of elite women who have access to resources which enable them to be high exposure in the first place. They may have studied with colleagues now working for donor agencies or have access to the international conference circuit. The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), realized this in their early years:

If they meet you and realize that what you are doing is important, that you're serious about your work and have accountability as well- some financial system in place and books to show them- then they are much

more prepared to fund you and also to recommend you to other funders. It's also a snowball effect: once you get one or two funders supporting a project, other funding agencies become interested (Johnson, 1990: 32).

These constraints often inhibit an NGO's ability to support the very people that they set out to fund in the first place: the poorest populations which consist of mainly women.

Evaluation Mechanisms

Donor agencies not only shape the lives of organizations they support because of their funding systems, but also because of the accounting and reporting they require (Ford-Smith, 1989: 100). **The time commitment required to write proposals and complete reports takes valuable time away from programming.** These demands from donors obstruct the groups's independent decision-making. The Women and Development Unit at the University of the West Indies faced many difficulties in the early years:

When WAND started, we used to get grants for one or two years. When you get a one year grant a third of the way into the year and then you have to write a six month report, the money by the end of the year and send in a report- that's too much hassle... (Norma: 1988: 10).

Sistren ran into similar time constraints when they developed funding linkages with international donors:

...the paperwork multiplied. The number of grant applications, the number of appointments with agency representatives all multiplied in an effort to find money for the real needs of the project (Ford-Smith, 1989: 64).

In Sistren's case, the demands on time threw the organization into crisis management, responding to whichever problem seemed to be most pressing, without considering

objectives, priorities, resources, accountability or impact. This had great impact on the running of the group and jeopardized the group's objectives and work.

Time is not the only resource needed to fulfil the obligations that donors expect. For Sistren, money was needed to actually complete the proposals:

Initially, funding and negotiating with funders had to be done by taking advantage of whatever opportunities came up. We had to find ways of "funding" our attempts to seek funding. For example, we had no money to xerox the endless pages of proposals. In desperation one day, we went to a large hotel, watched until the xerox room was empty, raced in, xeroxed frantically while somebody kept watch and raced out again (Ford-Smith, 1989: 63).

Not only is the reporting system demanding, it often requires such an intensive set of reports that educated members are needed to complete the administrative procedures. **There is a real contradiction in the type of groups that donors want to support and the complex paperwork that donors expect to be completed.** As part of the discussions at the North/South Dialogue at the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) Fourth World Assembly in Bangkok in January 1990, Rita Giacama of the Union of Medical Relief Committees in Occupied Palestine complained:

We have to present you with accounts, and my god, so many of them are so elaborate that I who teach at the university have a hard time with them (Giacama, 1990: 36).

The specialized accounting and reporting skills and procedures could only be done by experienced or university educated people. Again, many grassroots women's organizations have trouble applying and getting access to funding. Honor Ford-Smith explains:

A rhetorical stress was placed on funding grassroots women's work and on building up the productive capacities of women's groups when in fact the way that agencies operated led exactly to the opposite (Ford-Smith, 1989: 66).

This reporting system fails to be accountable to the base with whom the Northern NGO is working. The people being served by the project and to whom the project should in fact be accountable have little input in designing the criteria and in evaluating the achievements of the project. In most cases, these evaluation reports are based on criteria and a process that NGOs define:

Usually we have to draft the project according to the parameters of the evaluation in the sense that the agencies can evaluate it but there are other results that are not taken into account and sometimes they are more important (Suares, interview, 1992).

In response to this problem, some groups have tried to design and implement their own continuous evaluation process that is accountable to the constituency of women with whom they work. However, time constraints make it difficult for them to run their own evaluations:

The demands of project-to-project funding discouraged any commitment of our time and resources to evaluation. We were preoccupied with the process of keeping accounts and reporting that activities were fulfilled. Only in this way could we maintain our credibility, our chances of getting another grant and thus guarantee our survival (65). The pressures and demands of accounting to aid agencies very often overshadow and work against the need to account to the base we serve (Ford-Smith, 1990: 29)

In summary, then, although financial support channelled through Northern NGOs has assisted women's groups in the South, this has often been at the expense of objectives that the group considered important to their work. This is summed up well by Honor

Ford Smith in the case of Sistren:

[The funding structure] had an enormous impact on both the kind of work we did and our internal administration. Perhaps two of the most important aspects of what Sistren purported to be doing, namely providing a service for a constituency of Jamaican women and building a self help organization that would allow its members to improve their lives, were undermined by the structures and requirements of the relations with the funders (Ford-Smith, 1989: 69).

Conclusion

The Northern NGO structures and ways of operating have a tremendous influence on the work of Southern groups. Often, Southern organizations receive funds at the expense of their autonomy and control. This has significant implications for the relationships that Northern NGOs aim to foster with Southern groups. In addition, the Northern male bias that exists within these structures and processes interferes with the practice of egalitarian relationships. All in all, these constraints interfere with NGOs' capacity to deal with gender and to support the empowerment approach.

If NGOs are to provide an enabling environment for women's empowerment, strategies are needed for them to shift their work to focus on gender and the empowerment process. The multifarious standpoints of Southern women offer a unique starting point for Northern NGOs in their work towards organizational and operational change and designing and practising a more empowering relationship. The next chapter will present various strategies based on the critiques presented here.

Chapter 5

Prescriptions for Northern NGOs:

A Partnership for Empowerment

Introduction

Many NGOs are making efforts to improve their relations with Southern groups and are talking about forming real partnerships. However, few have succeeded in sufficiently incorporating women into their discussions and even fewer have addressed gender. This has real significance for women. Many of the organizations in the North that are attempting to practice a model of development that supports the empowerment of Southern constituents have neglected to factor in women's needs, concerns, experiences and strategies.

There are a number of constraints, identified in the previous chapter, that interfere with NGOs capacity both, to support notions of empowerment and also incorporate a gender sensitive approach in all aspects of work. In this chapter I propose a number of strategies that may assist NGOs in challenging these barriers. These ideas are based on philosophies of empowerment derived from some Southern feminist analyses

The Process of Empowerment Revisited

Southern feminist philosophies of empowerment are instructive for Northern NGOs in determining and designing strategies to rework their structures and operations so as to

create the potential for a transformed relationship.

The underlying tenets of the empowerment process are based on the belief that individuals need to be respected to make decisions for themselves. Each person should be given the opportunity to develop her full potential and creativity. Raising women's consciousness about their situations and providing strategies for them to challenge their subordination is the underlying philosophy of the process.

Some Southern feminists contend that the situations of poor women and their urgent need for change and fulfilment of basic survival needs makes them some of the most committed militant and energetic actors (Sen & Grown, 1987). However, the assumption of the infinite capacity of poor women to confront the crisis facing women is very dangerous. Systemic barriers within legislation and policy as well as within organizational structures and operations must be addressed, otherwise the entire burden rests on women's shoulders:

The real fact is that, in spite of all developments of the women's movement (its strength, creativity and capacity for innovation), this kind of expectation (that women solve the problems) is the weakest side of the process. It takes away responsibility from men or the state in relation to the needs of the population (Vargas, 1992: 30).

In order to address these tremendous obstacles, some feminists in the North and the South argue that NGOs must seek to empower women and enable them to cope by striving to make their organizations fully equitable and gender sensitive. This is

essential if NGOs intend to practice a model of development that supports the empowerment process of men and women in the South. Staff need to be aware that the need to differentiate the needs of men and women exists. They need to understand that men and women have different experiences, values, concerns and priorities and that these are important differences for development organizations to consider.

To get to this stage of gender equity, Northern NGOs must strive to eliminate forms of domination that are embedded in policies, practices, structures and operations. They must be strategic in addressing gender, race and class in terms of their entire organizational structure and operations.

Prescriptions for Northern NGOs

There are a number of steps that need to be taken for NGOs to achieve an organizational structure and manner of operating that are fully equitable and gender sensitive. These can be divided into three sections. First, policies need to be put in place to guide all decision-making including the allocation of resources, and the types of programming. Second, structures and operating processes must be altered to reflect an approach that supports notions of empowerment. And finally, attitudes of staff and society in general need to be challenged and altered so that the differential needs, experiences and strategies of Southern women as well as Southern men become intrinsic to everyday thinking and operating.

Organizational Gender Policies

Organizational policies provide guidelines for Northern NGO staff, volunteers, supporters and their Southern counterparts. Policies document the objectives and mandate of the agency and the process by which the agency will achieve them. Decisions about financial resources and development programming are made within this policy framework. Without policies, staff are forced to rely on their own intuition and experience to make decisions. This can lead to internal strife and misunderstanding as staff adopt contradictory approaches. Ultimately the lack of policies can increase the potential for confusion with Southern organizations (Plewes & Stuart, 1990: 4-5).

Despite the benefits of policies, many NGOs lack a comprehensive set of written policies to guide all aspects of their work. Following from this, it is not surprising that most have no policies to provide guiding principles for their activities with women. A survey of Canadian NGOs revealed that at least two-thirds of them did not have a gender policy in place and were not working on one (Plewes & Stuart, 1992: 33). When there are no policies, decisions are not based on guidelines. Instead, an NGO's approach to working with women ends up reflecting the staff's predominant ideology and development analyses.

For NGOs to support women's empowerment, a concerted effort is needed to challenge preconceived notions of gender relations. Gender policies that are designed with the participation of all staff, including Southern representatives, and facilitated by persons

experienced in the field of gender and development can provide guidance in constructing a coherent program in the work the agency does with women. If these themes are allowed to run throughout its programming, the organization's work can then have a greater impact.

Many of the organizations that are making efforts to address women's needs have designed women's desks or bureaux to provide the leadership to influence decisions in the organization. In most of these cases, their organizational policies address women only and not gender relations. It has become apparent in the last ten years that these efforts have been marginalized within the NGOs. Women's issues are ghettoized in one department and do not become part of all the organizational planning. Projects that are not specifically targeted at women seldom address their needs. These mainstream projects fail to take the structural impediments that discourage women's participation into account. In most cases the subordination of women relative to men is not acknowledged and is therefore not addressed. Rather than adopting a separate policy for women only, NGOs need a gender policy that shapes the entire organization and its operations. These policies will lead staff to make decisions from a gender sensitive perspective.

A Gender and Development Training Program designed by Match International and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation Gender and Development Program was started in the fall of 1989 to influence the Canadian NGO community to adopt gender

policies. In 1990, MATCH released a publication entitled Developing An Organizational Gender Policy. CUSO: A Case Study. It examined one Canadian NGO's experiences of designing and implementing a gender policy. The publication was meant as an educational tool to provide other NGOs with a framework to design their own policy. MATCH and CCIC continue to provide educational programs to influence the NGO community to develop and adapt gender inclusive policies (Plewes & Stuart, 1991).

Transforming Structures and Operations

Decision-Making Processes

Policies need to be designed with the intent of making Southern women and men central to all decision-making processes. In particular, since women are so often marginalized in projects and development thinking, NGOs need to make special efforts to ensure that Southern women are active participants in all aspects of decision-making. This includes all stages of the project cycle whether they happen on the ground in the local community or in the head office in Ottawa. Southern women need to be assessing needs and determining the feasibility of an initiative. They need to be designing as well as directing the most appropriate manner of implementation. In the final stages, they must be part of evaluating the successes and failures of the initiative according to their criteria. In other words, NGOs must give Southern women ownership of their own "development".

This involvement in projects needs to spill over to policy making. NGOs must be

willing to construct mechanisms so that Southern women are given forums to articulate and influence the design of policies. Southern women may insist that a Northern organization adopt a policy that forces all projects to reflect women's needs as well as men's, instead of assuming that they are both the same. Or they may insist that policies should be written that will cause NGOs to withdraw their staff from the field so that organizations in the South are given responsibility and autonomy. In summary, NGOs must ensure that they support women in determining their own strategies and programmes based on knowledge and experience of their specific situations. Tokunbo Ige of Nigeria and Shanthi Dairiam of Malaysia advise us with the following:

Donors need to honestly and fairly provide support for women's development in the way that women see their development and appreciate it (Ige, interview, 1992).

The point is that women's voices should be heard in the formulation of development policies and in defining the concepts of what development is all about (Dairiam, interview, 1992).

Rather than designing projects for women, NGOs must acknowledge the importance of designing projects with women. In fostering the empowerment of women, NGOs need to ensure a bottom up-participatory approach that supports locally based community groups. Tokunbo Ige suggests:

I think basically what I would like to see is whatever they (donors) are doing they must always take into consideration what our needs are and try to help, sort of hold our hand, not to go all on our behalf but support us in articulating what our demands are, by ourselves (Ige, interview, 1992)

Northern NGOs need to develop systems to meet women on a common terrain to commit to transforming social, economic, political processes that inhibit women's

empowerment and autonomy. Strategies must be found to ensure women's full participation as agents and beneficiaries. Mechanisms that provide women with channels to influence and control decision-making should be based on a consultative process that creates a dialectic relationship between staff in Northern agencies and women in Southern groups and communities.

For instance, boards of directors that oversee the planning of an agency's development work ought to have representation of women from the local communities in which the NGO is working. The Inter-Church Fund, a body composed of six churches in Toronto, has a board of directors that has three Southern representatives on it, two of who are women. According to Bob Fuger, the Chair of the Board, these representatives have substantially altered the agenda of the Fund. Although each representative, whether of Northern or Southern origin, has an equal vote, the Southern arguments are always respected and are never voted down. One of the results of this was the publishing of "Diminishing Our Future" a document that criticises CIDA and other bilateral and multilateral agency support for structural adjustment. Another result, in direct relation to the female representatives from both the North and the South has been the incorporation of gender relations and women's concerns into the agenda. The "old boys club" has been transformed and the board is a lot more receptive to addressing gender concerns than it was thirteen years ago when the Fund began (Fuger, interview, 1993).

Furthermore, seminars and workshops could be organized to bring women from

Southern communities in as consultants, trainers, speakers, experts to better inform the Northern agency work (CCIC, 1991: 70). A few years ago the Sistren Consortium arranged an educational visit of a few Sistren members to Canada. They performed their popular theatre and conducted workshops. Sistren is no longer considered an amateur "poor women's" theatre company. Many Canadian groups have requested documentation and training seminars to assist them in their own popular education work (Murchie, interview, 1992).

It could be argued that non-hierarchical structures within Northern NGOs could assist in providing more room for Southern women to participate. Horizontal or collective decision-making that fosters a process in which decisions are based on consensus, can empower staff to participate. In such situations, staff could then transfer this way of operating into their relationships with Southern organizations. Inter Pares is one Canadian NGO that is based on a collective structure. They have adopted feminist principles of management that are now intrinsic to their content and process and guide their entire operation (Murphy, interview, 1993).

These proposals suggest that a sense of democratic process is needed within an NGO's structure so that their operations reflect the needs and strategies of men and women in the South. This will ultimately better their efforts and overall impact:

Some of the best NGOs have worked with grassroots groups doing consciousness raising, organizing and mobilizing. In these programs they have been able to develop a new type of democratic leadership among the most disadvantaged sectors of women (AWRAN, 1985: 60).

These processes of decision-making can provide mechanisms of accountability. They can ensure that the women and men who the organization is serving have some influence over the running of the Northern organization and the relationship:

There is a need... to get together to meet with funding agencies so that rather than funding agencies letting us know what our priorities should be, what kinds of programs we should develop, we can be telling them what our needs are (Johnson, 1990: 33).

According to Honor Ford-Smith (interview, 1993), Northern agencies must make their structures accountable not just to the donors such as CIDA and the public, but also to the population in the Southern communities with whom they are working:

The opening of political processes to accommodate greater expression of opinions and dissent, as well as participation of poor people in the decisions that affect their lives at the macro and the micro levels, is crucial (Sen & Grown, 1987: 81).

An excellent illustration of a dialectic relationship characterised by a democratic process and inclusive decision-making is MATCH International's Consultation process. In 1988, the agency arranged a meeting with Southern representatives of the organizations that they supported to determine the future programming of MATCH. The overwhelming response from Southern participants was that they wanted support and funding to combat violence against women. This caused MATCH to adopt Violence Against Women as one of the priority program themes that continues to operate today (Pypops, interview, 1993).

Funding Structures

NGOs need to carefully examine and attempt to rework their funding systems if they intend to support women's empowerment. NGOs do not provide a great amount of funding for women's activities and organizations. Without an extensive survey, it is difficult to estimate the support that the NGO community offers women. It would not be unfair however to state that it is small (Pypops, 1993). Moreover, the current short term manner of supporting groups in the South leads to great amounts of insecurity and dependence which ultimately affects the types and quality of programs that women's groups can offer. NGOs must first, determine concerns raised by women's groups and second, respond to these concerns as best they can.

Some NGOs have designed innovative funding strategies to provide more funds over a longer term. For instance, block funding gives groups more support and security in the long term. In Sistren's case, a number of Canadian NGOs formed a consortium to increase the flow of funds over a five year period. Not only did this provide Sistren with greater security and an increased amount of funds, it decreased the amount of paperwork that Sistren had to complete. Prior to this arrangement, twelve Canadian NGOs were supporting Sistren individually and expected reports that documented the use of their funds. Organizing a consortium funding arrangement collapsed all twelve reports into one. An important spin-off of the consortium arrangement was that since it pulled together twelve different agencies, together these Northern groups could lobby and have a greater political voice. Increased funding from CIDA was one important

result of this.

Although innovative funding strategies offer Southern groups more flexibility, support and assistance, it should be noted that in the long-term, overall self-sufficiency and complete security is not possible when an external body is providing support. Just as it was not possible for the Consortium members themselves, in Sistren's case complete self-sufficiency was not achieved since funding was only provided for 5 to 10 years (Murchie, 1990).

Other mechanisms have been designed to provide women and their organizations with increased funding and more flexible conditions. Some funding organizations have been developed specifically to support women only. These agencies extend support to women's organizations that are not able to access money from the mainstream donors. The United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was founded in 1976 to provide financial and technical support to ensure the participation of women in all stages of the development process. In the same year, MATCH International began supporting women and assisting in the building of coalitions amongst women's groups in the South and between the North and the South. The Global Fund for Women is an international grant making organization that was established in 1987 in California. Acknowledging the importance of improving women's condition and position, the Fund provides support with the following objectives in mind:

to seed, strengthen, and link groups that are committed to women's well being and that work for their full participation in society; to encourage

increased support for women's programming globally; to provide leadership in promoting a greater understanding of the importance of supporting women's full participation internationally (Global Fund for Women, 1992).

The organization is committed to giving flexible, responsive and timely support to "women's groups working on emerging, controversial, or difficult issues". Currently the Fund responds to three areas of concern: female human rights, women's access to communications, media, communications technology and the economic autonomy of women (Global Fund For Women, 1992).

Donors that gear themselves specifically for women only appear to be better suited to match the needs of women's groups for a number of reasons. They appear to be more aware of the oppression facing women and they seem to understand the importance of addressing empowerment. They seem to understand the obstacles that women face in accessing funds for their programs and in making decisions about their projects once they have become linked with a Northern donor.

However, in many cases, these groups that are trying to develop alternative funding strategies themselves are dependent on CIDA or other government funding bodies. In Canada and in other donor countries, the importance of supporting women and gender equality is still not taken as seriously as it should. The consequence is that women only donors do not have access to the government funds that multilateral and bilateral donors have. Just like the organizations that they fund, they themselves have to struggle to raise the monies for "experience has shown that institutions that are only for women

2 OF 2

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have less funding than global institutions" (Suarez, interview, 1992).

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

A further area of operations that NGOs must address if empowering women is one of their development objectives is monitoring and evaluation. NGOs need flexible information systems to ensure that they learn from past mistakes and failures. Evaluations are important if they provide useful recommendations and feedback on which future projects can be built. For this process to occur, Northern NGOs need to rethink the purpose and process of their evaluation instruments so that evaluations reflect the objective of their work, social change:

New processes should be evolved and new instruments be forged to allow for such evaluations...this is an exercise which takes time and should be prepared in consultation be several women's networks and donors, then tested on a pilot case and improved. Obviously qualitative evaluation is a lot more difficult to handle than a quantitative one, but it is the only valid instrument of measurement in this case (Helie-Lucas, 1992: 6-7).

Rather than just measuring the improvement in women's condition, evaluations need to take into account the impact of the project on women's position, the levels of women's participation, and the access and control of resources and benefits* women accrue from NGO programs:

* In addition to accessibility, control over the resources determines whether women may accrue the benefits of those resources. However it needs to be acknowledged that women's access and control will not necessarily ensure a full return of benefits--for instance when time and labour is secured as a resource but the benefits accrue to a household within which inequitable power relations determines the distribution of benefits (Keays, 1991: 3).

...there is a general lack of know-how on how to evaluate a project's contribution towards women's development. The lack of activity in this area is compounded by the confusion of different methodologies in project evaluation, as well as the domination of the field of cost benefit analysis...[this method] is concerned with measuring project outputs whereas the evaluation of a women's development project must be concerned with assessing whether the social and political processes of empowerment are taking place (Longwe, 1991: 155).

Like other development agencies NGOs have an important need to monitor the disbursement of their funds. NGOs are nonprofit organizations that are dependent on grants from CIDA and private donations from the Canadian public. This relationship has caused NGOs to incorporate accountability mechanisms to Northern donors into their processes so they can respond to their funders. Often, as explained in the previous chapter, these mechanisms involve detailed and time consuming reporting that interferes with the running of Southern groups.

There are a number of ways that Northern NGOs could address this problem. It may be useful for NGOs to consult with their counterparts in the South to determine the most appropriate process and criteria to monitor the work. Too often representatives from the Northern agency are sent to evaluate the project and to monitor how the resources are allocated. This method neglects to factor in those who the project was designed by and for:

The habit of sending out a big group of consultants from the agencies, added by one woman from the developing country, will have to change if we want to attain autonomy (Awori, 1992: 36).

NGOs may argue that CIDA and other donors demand that certain monitoring processes

are followed. In such cases, NGOs should make every attempt to press CIDA and other supporters to accept an alternative that the Southern groups consider suitable. Just as NGOs need to rethink their work and their strategies, CIDA must be willing to engage in similar evaluative thinking.

Finally, NGOs need to increase the flow of information and documentation to the South to keep Southern groups better informed of the Northern NGO's situation and the status of the relationship (Anonymous b, 1991). For instance, Southern groups must be kept abreast of financial cutbacks and economic difficulties in Canada, changes that can have severe impacts on their work and the sustainability and survival of their organization. Somehow, NGOs need to balance the flow of paperwork so Southern groups do not feel that they are giving more information about themselves than they are receiving about Northern groups.

Research Methodologies

NGOs must ensure that the research they are using to inform their programming decisions is based on appropriate knowledge of Southern women's lives. They must constantly challenge the androcentric and ethnocentric biases inherent in development research.

The North-South Institute (NSI), located in Ottawa, is an example of an organization that is challenging the androcentric orientation of research methods and analyses. The

Institute is a nonprofit corporation established in 1976 to provide professional, policy-relevant research on 'North-South' issues. Currently research is being conducted in four main areas. In the three program areas termed "Trade and Adjustment", "Human Rights and Democratic Government", and "International Finance" gender is incorporated. For instance women's human rights are examined as part of the Human Rights program. In addition to these there is a fourth area called "Women's Progress" that focuses on women specifically. The Institute made a conscious decision to incorporate gender in all aspects of its work and to also focus one program area on women since there was such a lack of information in this area.

Not only is it important that gender is incorporated into Northern research, it is also important that Southern women have a voice in the creation of knowledge. NGOs must not "appropriate" women's voices nor base their policy and planning decisions on erroneous ethnocentric assumptions. According to Narayan, Southern women may have an "epistemic advantage" in constructing knowledge about their situations. This ultimately gives them a unique and important place in designing and assessing development practices. Their "concrete embodiments as members of a specific class, race and gender" and the "concrete historical situation necessarily play significant roles" in how they see the world (Narayan, 1989: 261). It is within this context and experience of oppression that Southern women see and experience their world and give them the claim to know:

Our commitment to the contextual nature of knowledge does not require us to claim that those who do not inhabit these contexts can never have

any knowledge of them. But this commitment does permit us to argue that it is easier and more likely for the oppressed to have critical insights into the conditions of their own oppression than it is for those who live outside these structures. Those who actually live with the oppression of class, race, or gender have faced the issues that such oppression generate in a variety of different situations. The insights and emotional responses engendered by these situations are a legacy with which they confront any new issue or situation (Narayan, 1989: 264).

This explanation provides a strong support for supporting women's research interests as they define them. A platform needs to be accessible for women:

...to tell their own stories, what their priorities are, what their concerns are....Otherwise we are going to have a situation where an agenda is set somewhere, priorities are set which may not be relevant to women, especially in Africa (Kuenyehia, 1992).

Without the recovery of Southern voices, the relations between Northern researchers and Southern peoples is just another form of colonization that reinforces exploitative North-South trends. Moreover, without the recovery of Southern women's voices, research reinforces both women's subordination based on gender as well as on their geographical location in the South. In other words, both ethnocentric and androcentric biases are at play. According to Regina Cammy Shakakata in her paper presented at the South African Women's Initiatives (SAWI) "Workshop on Women" held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania in 1992:

It is suggested that scholarship and research for and by women should consciously struggle to overcome the androcentricity by emphasising and documenting women's invisible knowledge, meaning women's social history, women's perceptions of their own situation, their own subordination and resistance. The affirmative alternative to androcentric research is that women ought to do their own research and that they themselves ought to be gender sensitised (Shakakata, 1992: 7).

Many feminists in the North and South are insisting on research methodologies based on participatory, feminist and activist principles. It is a situation when the research problem originates from the community and the ultimate goal is fundamental structural transformation and the improvement of the lives of those involved. It strives to document women's social history, women's perceptions of their own situation, their own subordination and resistance. In the end it aims to generate new social knowledge that can lead to gradual developmental change (Shakakata, 1992: 8-9). This process takes into account women's reality by contextualizing women's lives and emphasizing the transformative potential of research (Rasack, 1991: 21).

According to Peggy Antrobus (1988) research that seeks to improve women's lives and bring about change must adopt dialogues or dialectic relationships. As Longwe writes:

...women's development does not need researchers who are objective in the sense of being dispassionate observers. On the contrary, research for women's development ... needs researchers who are part of the community, who are committed to the community, and who are ideologically committed to the ideals of women's equality and women's empowerment (Longwe, 1992: 4)

Again the North-South Institute serves as a good example. Within the Women's Progress program, there are a number of areas of study. One of these is the India Project which links a Canadian research centre (NSI) and an Indian women's research centre, the Centre for Women's Development Study. This joint research project assigns \$130,000 to the India group and \$110,000 to the Canadian group. Together the organizations examine macroeconomic policy impacts on women in Canada and India.

Not only should NGOs be basing their work and decisions on Southern women's research, they should also be utilizing this information to advocate structural change in international development and in society at large. Again, Regina Cammy Shakakata explains:

Use of appropriate research methodologies to do gender analysis does not in itself empower women, but it is how the information obtained from the research is used that gives power to women to be assertive and self confident (Shakakata, 1992: 9).

Changing Attitudes

Many steps can be taken within an NGO to develop a gender sensitive approach that has positive consequences for women. Gender policies can influence the design and implementation of projects. They can raise staff's awareness about the importance of a gender analysis. They can influence staff to challenge the structures and operations of the organization itself. As explained above, the decision-making processes, the manner of extending funding, the systems of accountability and research can be changed bit by bit to increase flexibility and appropriateness of programs and operations for supporting women's empowerment. However, the most difficult challenge for NGOs is to change the attitudes within the organization.

It is crucial that attitudes that create and reinforce ethnocentric and male biases are challenged to ensure that organizational structures and operations undergo a process of transformation. The process of changing attitudes requires a great amount of political will and dedication on the part of enlightened staff. Instituting policies that guide

decisions relating to gender roles and relations is only half the battle. If the goal of organizational change is to produce fully gender sensitive and equitable organizations, steps need to be taken to ensure that gender policies are implemented.

Northern NGOs must be willing to critically examine their staffing structures to eradicate ethnocentric and male biased ideologies. A serious gap exists between the positioning of staff who are predominantly white middle class men and the women and men at whom they are aiming their work. This sets up a relationship in which staff are working for Southern people and not with them. In the case of Southern women, this relationship reinforces the "charity approach" and the attitude that Southern women are poor, unfortunate suffering people who have to be helped to help themselves (Ford-Smith, interview, 1993). It could be said that the staffing structures of NGOs mirror the class structures of Canadian society. For most positions in NGOs, a staff member requires middle class literacy and educational credentials (Ferguson, 1984: 106). An NGO needs to think hard about their line of business, why they are in it and the values their staff emulates. NGOs must address the cross section of individuals holding the decision-making positions according to gender, race and class, the balance of men and women hired, the type of jobs they hold, and the salary inequities that may exist. The previous chapter provided evidence indicating that female staff are more likely to challenge projects and policies that either ignore, marginalize or harm women. Following from this, NGOs could think about enacting an affirmative action policy in their hiring practices.

Another strategy that has become popular in the Canadian NGO community to challenge discriminating attitudes towards women has been gender training. There are three main objectives of gender training. First, to provide skills for planners and practitioners to enable them to facilitate development strategies that consider gender and that will ultimately benefit women. Second, to introduce concepts and analyses of gender to raise the understanding of gender relations and their importance to the development process and to increase the support for the empowerment of women. Third, to change attitudes and behaviours so as to increase the awareness of the differential needs and priorities of women and men. These objectives can be labelled professional, political and personal (Plewes & Stuart, 1990; Cloud, 1991; Overholt, Anderson & Austin, 1985).

Gender training is based on the concept of gender awareness, which for Longwe includes three primary components:

...first, the recognition that women have different and special needs; second, that they are a disadvantaged group, relative to men, in terms of their level of welfare and access to and control over the factors of production; third that women's development entails working towards increased equality and empowerment for women, relative to men (Longwe, 1991: 150).

These consciousness raising and skills training seminars can range from a half day event to a full week session. They provide participants with opportunities to discuss some of the notions of gender bias; to identify gender bias at home, at work and in society; to correct sexist ways of thinking, speaking and behaving; to discuss the diversity of the women's movement; to explore feminist values and principles; and to internalise gender

fair values into one's daily life (Balayon, 1991: 1).

Overall, gender training attempts to provide practical guidance for identifying, designing, planning, implementing and monitoring more gender sensitive and effective programs, projects and policies. It strives to influence the structures and operations of Northern NGOs to increase staff's awareness and support for women's empowerment. Gender training has extremely high expectations as it strives to improve women's position and condition overseas and in Canada.

There are a number of both private and public organizations that have operationalized gender sensitive training programs however the experience of it is not yet clear. The challenge in assessing training is to know how to measure it. If the training is effective for the staff and the organization this will not necessarily trickle down to the women in Southern communities for whom the training was originally designed. Although it is important that the members of an organization are gender aware and sensitive, gender sensitive training cannot be labelled successful if Southern women are not receiving the benefits.

Staff must be willing to challenge every assumption that they hold regarding their relations with Southern women. This includes their preconceived notions of women's and men's roles, the objectives of international development and their beliefs about their society as well as others.

It should be noted that any change takes time and as more and more development practitioners become more gender conscious, the support for gender analysis and recognition of its importance to the development process may grow. In the long-run, a beneficial consequence might be an increase in the support for providing women, in the South as well as the North, with enabling environments for women's empowerment.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

This paper set out to determine whether Northern NGOs could support a process of development that would provide enabling environments for women living in the South to become empowered. Evidence presented in the previous chapter indicates that some NGOs are designing and adopting specific strategies to provide Southern women with more decision making control throughout all aspects of the development process. This paper contends that the potential for such a relationship with Southern women's groups is possible only if staff within the Northern based groups are willing to challenge their ethnocentric and male biased assumptions.

This is the challenge for Northern NGOs. If they are truly serious about practising a model of development that enables women as well as men to be empowered, it is essential that they critically examine their inherent biases, their ways of operations, and their organizational structures.

The process of writing a thesis is an evolving one -- more so than I ever imagined. It is a time of challenging one's mind to see things differently and to broaden one's horizons. This paper reflects the changes that my thinking has undergone since I set off on this task. This journey is important to document. It represents the struggles that I faced and continue to face as I challenge my own ideas about gender relations and the structures in society that reinforce these roles. These struggles are parallel to those that

NGOs must face as they attempt to achieve change within their organizations on the route to becoming fully equitable and gender sensitive.

When I originally started this work, I was most interested in the "partnership strategy" that Northern organizations, particularly NGOs, were practising with their Southern counterparts. This was very much related to my interest and previous involvement in the NGO community. As I investigated the concept and the work that had been done around it, I recognized a major flaw in the strategy: very few NGOs were practising relations with Southern groups that acknowledged or addressed the power relations based on gender, race, class, geographical location, etc.

At the same time, to further cause my ideas to evolve, my academic pursuits led me to enrol in two feminist courses. Suddenly the male biases and ethnocentric assumptions underlying international development thinking and practice, as reflected in the "partnership strategy" became clear to me. In my role as a feminist researcher, I recognised that I could contribute to the development community by providing a gender analysis of partnership.

When I look back, I see that I have come a long way. When I first started this project I saw only "people". In my first term of school I wrote papers on the participation of "people" in development efforts. Looking back over these papers, I find the terms empowerment, self reliance, independence, control, NGOs, but no where can I find

women, men or gender. Like many NGOs that support projects for people, I failed to see that women and men have differential needs, concerns and experiences.

With my introduction to feminist writings in international development, I began to see that the mainstream ways of doing things, for instance designing and implementing projects, were based on male knowledges. I began to insist that development planning needed to incorporate women as well as men.

It has only been recently that I have recognized the oppressive power structures in our societies and throughout the world that serve to press women into subordinate roles. The all-pervasive issue of violence against women that is found throughout countries in both the North and the South has been impossible to ignore.

For the longest time my thesis was that women needed to be included into development decisions and practices, termed the "add women and stir" recipe, according to critics. I was having a terrible time turning the dominant paradigm of gender relations on its head. Yes, I felt unsafe at night, yes I knew women who had been raped, yes I recognized that approximately 80 per cent of the families in poverty are sole-support single mothers. The materials that I was reading continued to cite evidence on the declining conditions and positions of women in Southern countries. Nevertheless, I could not see the systemic inequities between women and men that caused these situations.

This lack of commitment on my part caused my writing to suffer. When I started a new section, I would always begin with the dominant paradigm, I would criticize it and then would finish with the feminist analysis, the part that in fact should have gone first. It took drafts and drafts before women became the central focus of the paper. It took even more drafts before I was willing to examine gender relations and the power imbalance between men and women.

Although I have taken a stand in this paper, I realize that my ideas are constantly evolving. At the rate that I have been going, in three months time, this possibly, could be a very different paper.

The challenges in writing a thesis are tremendous. I like to think that this has been worthwhile. I am amazed at how far I have come and what I now see out of my eyes: "It's like a pair of glasses that once you put them on, you can never take them off". Some women and many men constantly challenge my views now. At times it is difficult and I waver or I walk away. But at others, I stand firm and argue my view. I hope that my commitment to my self and other women will continue to grow. For it is up to every individual's strength and conviction to improve the conditions and positions of women that will ultimately lead to social change in gender relations.

NGOs have the potential to play a very important role in the transformation of gender relations and the support of women's equality internationally. It is important for NGOs

to embrace this agenda. Gender subordination inhibits women's choices, it takes away their power to make decisions and it threatens the sustainability of our societies. Staff within NGOs must be willing to embrace change within their own organizations in order to support women's equality and to work towards eliminating oppressions that women face based on their gender, race, class and geographical location. It is up to each and every employee and volunteer within NGOs to have the courage to engage in such a meaningful struggle.

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Appendix A

Interview Questionnaires

A.1: Questionnaire for Representatives of Northern NGOs

- (1) Partnership
 - * what do you think of the partnership concept?
 - * is it a workable strategy in linking Southern women's groups with Northern organizations?
- (2) Linkages with Women's Groups
 - * how could they be improved?
 - * what do you see as the problems with these linkages?
 - * how can the division of powers be more equally distributed?
- (3) Roles and Responsibilities
 - * what roles should Northern NGOs take with respect to women's groups in the South?
 - * what responsibilities do they have to Southern women's groups?
 - * describe the power relations you see between Northern and Southern groups
- (4) Your organization
 - * how does your organization deal with these issues?
 - * what women's groups are you linked with?
 - types
 - programming
 - funding mechanisms and systems
 - division of labour
 - * what does your group receive from the relationship?
 - * what does Southern group receive from the relationship?
 - * what constraints are you working under that interferes with relationship?
 - * what opportunities have come from the relationship?

A.2: Questionnaire for Representatives of Southern Women's Groups

- (1) Partnership
 - * what do you think of the partnership concept?
 - * is it a workable strategy in linking Southern women's groups with Northern organizations?
- (2) Linkages with Northern NGOs
 - * how could they be improved?
 - * what do you see as the problems with these linkages?
 - * what is the debate in the South?
 - * how can the division of powers be more equally distributed?
- (3) Roles and Responsibilities
 - * what roles should Northern NGOs take with respect to women's groups in the South?
 - * what roles should Southern groups take?
 - * what responsibilities do they have to Southern women's groups?
 - * describe the power relations you see between Northern and Southern groups
- (4) Your organization
 - * how does your organization deal with these issues?
 - * what Northern NGOs are you linked with?
 - types
 - programming
 - funding mechanisms and systems
 - division of labour
 - * what does your group receive from the relationship?
 - * what does Northern group receive from the relationship?
 - * what constraints does the relationship with Northern NGOs pose for your work?
 - * what opportunities have come from the relationship?

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