



gender and development network

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

A GAD NETWORK THINK PIECE

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The UK Gender And Development Network (GADN)

The **GAD Network** is a diverse membership network of over 170 representatives of leading organisations and institutions working on gender and development issues in the UK. We enjoy close and regular contact with government officials and key agencies as a result of our quality research, papers, lobbying and training. GADN members also come from organisations and academic bodies working with partners, consultants and networks worldwide. The GADN actively supports and encourages the sharing of information, expertise and research papers with southern partners. The Network provides an informal but important support structure for gender professionals working in an increasingly difficult development environment.

Aims and Objectives:

The **overall Goal** of the GAD Network, which informs all its objectives and activities, is twofold:

- 1) To strengthen member organisations & individuals by keeping them informed on gender & development issues through networking & information sharing
- 2) To act as an effective advocacy tool for gender and development concerns particularly with government and other decision-making bodies.

For more information about the GAD Network, please contact emily@womankind.org.uk

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SUMMARY

This paper emerges from interest among GAD Network members to learn more about the current emphasis on diversity across UK organisations (private, public and voluntary sector). Its main focus is to consider what is happening to gender in the diversity debate? This means looking at two inter-related issues:

- how gender fares as **one of many strands of difference** included under the rubric of a diversity approach; and
- the opportunities provided by a diversity approach for looking at the **intersection of gender with other areas of difference**.

While attempting to address these issues, the paper also takes a broader look how the term diversity is being used, what is driving the diversity agenda and how diversity is being institutionalised in international development organisations. The paper is based on a literature review of relevant academic materials as well as internal and external documents from a range of institutions outlining their approach to diversity. Interviews were also carried out with staff from a number of international development organisations, some public sector bodies and consultants working on gender and diversity issues.

To a large extent, the discourse around diversity reflects an **organisational development and management approach** emanating from human resources departments and driven by the UK political and legislative context. While it stems, in part, from a need for organisations to ‘get their own houses in order’ with regard to greater diversity in staffing, it also has quite distinct meanings related to ‘valuing differences’ among staff and making linkages between diversity and wider organisational performance. The paper considers the need for an approach to diversity that balances an emphasis on recognising and valuing difference with an understanding of power relations and inequalities. It also raises questions about the appropriateness of ‘global diversity strategies’ drafted in relation to the UK context. The paper goes on to suggest that there are many similarities between approaches to ‘gender and organisational change’ and diversity as an organisational development approach and, if used strategically, the diversity agenda can potentially support gender mainstreaming within organisations.

At the same time, the discourse around diversity is also being used in the context of programme work and is linked to wider discussions around rights based approaches, discrimination and social inclusion, for example. From this perspective two trends are highlighted that are of particular relevance to gender mainstreaming:

- There have been growing demands for **the ‘mainstreaming’ of other strands of difference** (e.g. race and ethnicity, age, disability) into the work of development organisations.
- At the same time, there are calls for **more unified approaches** to difference and discrimination to (1) highlight the **root causes of discrimination** and (2) address the reality that individuals **experience multiple forms of discrimination** based upon their multiple identities.

The paper looks at the implications for gender mainstreaming of both trends. It places particular emphasis on **intersectional analysis** – an attempt to take a more holistic approach to gender and diversity. One of the most compelling issues to emerge from this paper **is the apparent failure of current approaches to gender mainstreaming to take on board the intersection of gender with other areas of difference.**

While considerable space is given to looking at theoretical/conceptual issues such as those outlined above, the paper also provides some examples of the way in which **diversity is being ‘institutionalised’** in practice within international development organisations. Many of the influences noted above have encouraged a rethinking about the existing institutional structures and strategies for addressing diversity (i.e. the need to take on board a wider range of issues and the need for more unified or holistic approaches to difference and discrimination). While it is still early days, a number of issues and concerns are raised with regard to gender, which are pertinent to other areas of difference as well. For example, potential competition over resources among different strands of difference; the possible emergence of ‘hierarchies of difference’; conflicting agendas; appropriate staffing, expertise and training; fears of loss of focus on single strand issues; and debates about the need for unified versus distinct frameworks, methodologies and tools to deal with different strands of diversity.

Given the time and space constraints this paper can only highlight some of the key issues with regard to the implications of diversity for gender mainstreaming. Nonetheless, it is hoped that it will provide a springboard for further discussions and research by the GAD Network and its members. Some of the main issues for further debate could include:

- Is there a need for greater clarity on how the term diversity is being used?
- How can approaches to diversity be supported that both value difference and address power relations/inequality/discrimination?
- Can rights-based approaches provide a framework for looking at a wider range of diversity issues?
- How can organisations work better to bring a diverse range of issues to the table with the core aim of fighting discrimination (and avoid ‘hierarchies of interest’ and ‘competition’ between groups)?
- How can a focus on specific areas of difference (e.g. gender, disability, age, ethnicity) be maintained within more unified or holistic approaches to development?
- How can current gender analysis frameworks be strengthened and adapted to better account for the intersection between difference sources of discrimination?
- How useful is intersectional analysis in this context?
- Can participation and participatory approaches be used to promote greater diversity in development?

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADD	Action on Disability in Development
APRODEV	Association of World Council of Churches related Development Organisations in Europe
AI	Amnesty International
CEHR	Commission for Equal and Human Rights
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
DFID	Department for International Development
GAD	Gender and Development
EO	Equal Opportunities
EU	European Union
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency (Australia)
KAR	DFID Disability Knowledge and Research Programme
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEEECIS	Middle East, Eastern Europe and CIS region, Oxfam GB
MRG	Minority Rights Group
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
SC UK	Save the Children
UN	United Nations
VSO	Voluntary Service Organisation
WIDE	Women In Development Europe

The diversity agenda does have the advantage of drawing attention to rights and discrimination, but it is not clear whether the impact of attention to diversity issues...will also be positive for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights. (Macdonald, 2003)

...there is very little debate on diversity in organisations seeking to promote women's rights, because such differences and conflicts are seen as a betrayal of the feminist cause. (Murthy, 2004)

Gender and diversity have been yoked together in this organization, but there is an unequal relationship between the two...with diversity losing out. (Staff member, international development NGO)

Gender mainstreaming as currently practiced does not account for the diversity of women. (IWDA, 2003:3)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The quotes above give an indication of the spectrum of opinion that exists in relation to discussions on gender and diversity within development organisations. They also suggest that there is much to be done to build up trust between different groups in order to take advantage of the potential opportunities provided by a diversity approach.

This paper emerges from interest among GAD Network members to learn more about the current emphasis on 'diversity' across UK organisations (private, public and voluntary sector). It builds on a recent scoping study by Save the Children UK which looks at the approaches to diversity currently taken by UK development organisations (Csáky and Hyder, 2004). The main focus here, however, is to consider what is happening to gender in the diversity debate? We explore two inter-related sets of issues:

- **how gender fares as one of many strands of difference included under the umbrella of a diversity approach, and**
- **what opportunities are provided by a diversity approach for looking at the intersection of gender with other areas of difference?**

In reflecting on these issues the paper addresses the following main questions:

- What does diversity mean?
- What is driving the diversity agenda within UK international development organisations?
- How is diversity being 'institutionalised'?
- How does diversity fit with existing organisational strategies for gender?

- What are the implications for gender of more unified approaches to tackling discrimination implied in a diversity approach?
- Are there lessons (strategies, methodologies, tools) from gender mainstreaming that can be relevant for other areas of diversity? and
- How can a wider diversity approach strengthen current approaches to gender mainstreaming?

This paper attempts to untangle some of the current debates, to identify challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equality within the diversity agenda, and to suggest areas for further discussion and research.

1.2 What is meant by diversity?

In the context of political and organisational discourse, ‘diversity’ is most commonly used as a catchall phrase to refer to differences among people such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. Beyond this, however, definitions of diversity differ greatly from organisation to organisation according to how such differences are perceived, which are prioritised and how they are ‘managed’. Importantly, they also differ in the extent to which they address power relations and discrimination.

Where diversity discourse emanates from human resources departments, it has quite distinct meanings related to valuing difference and the importance of diversity to wider organisational performance. Where diversity is used in the context of programme work other meanings come to the fore, often linked to discussions around social inclusion, discrimination and rights. In their scoping study of approaches to diversity in UK development agencies, Csáky and Hyder (2004) note that the concepts used in relation to diversity are poorly understood and open to interpretation and debate: in addition to diversity, they include equal opportunities, discrimination, prejudice, inclusion, identity, gender, ethnicity, disability, and race/racism. Indeed with the diversity debate there is some confusion about how these terms are used and how they fit together.

This paper takes as its starting point the understanding that diversity is a specific approach to organisational development. This approach to diversity is reflected in many of the organisations consulted. At the same time, background research and consultations suggest that debates around diversity encompass a much wider spectrum of ideas and approaches to difference and discrimination. Within these debates two trends are highlighted here that are of particular importance to gender mainstreaming:

- There have been growing demands for **other strands of difference to be recognised** (e.g. race and ethnicity, age, disability) and taken into account, or mainstreamed, by development organisations – these give rise to certain institutional imperatives related to managing these different strands of diversity with obvious resource implications.
- Debates around diversity highlight the importance of **taking more unified approaches** to difference and discrimination – unified approaches, it is argued, are needed to (1) highlight the **root causes of discrimination** and (2) address the

reality that individuals **experience multiple forms of discrimination** based upon their multiple identities.

Crudely put, there is both a broadening out and a reigning in of issues on the agenda. These trends are related and at the same time in tension with each other. This may help to explain the level of ambivalence there appears to be around the diversity agenda.

1.3 Notes on methodology

This paper is designed as a think piece to outline some of key issues related to gender and diversity and from this to identify possible areas of research, debate and advocacy for the Gender And Development Network (see Annex 1 for TORs). It is based on a review of relevant academic literature related to diversity issues as well as internal and public documents from a range of institutions outlining their approach to diversity issues. Interviews were also carried out with staff from a range of international development organisations, some public sector bodies and independent consultants working on diversity issues (see Annex 2). While its focus is primarily on the UK international development sector, the paper attempts to locate the experience within development organizations in relation to wider trends within the UK context and beyond. Similarly, it draws on concrete examples from other sectors where points of comparison are relevant. Given the focus on gender and diversity, the rich and wide debates on diversity can be covered in only a schematic way. Where possible, references to resources are made for those who would like to explore these issues further.

2. Key trends and ideas influencing the debates on diversity

This section looks at some of the trends, concepts and ideas that have influenced current thinking on diversity in UK-based international development organisations. These influences have been operating at different levels:

- in the context of political and legislative changes in the UK;
- in relation to dominant models of organisational development for working in multicultural environments; and
- in relation to global shifts in the development discourse and strategy.

This section also addresses the question of whether the diversity debate is UK/Northern led. It considers whether diversity is something new or simply another way of describing something that many organisations are already doing. Finally, some specific issues that these discussions raise in relation to gender mainstreaming are explored.

2.1 The UK political and legislative context

Since the late 1990s there have been some key political and legislative developments that have influenced thinking about diversity in the UK context. The ‘Modernising

Government' agenda, launched in 1999, made diversity a priority and placed a requirement on Civil Service Departments to include a section on promoting diversity in their service delivery agreements. The Stephen Lawrence inquiry (starting July 1997) and the Macpherson Report (1999) which defined "institutional racism"¹ as well as the introduction of the public sector duty (to promote good race relations) under the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) raised the profile of race equality in many public sector organisations. The steady flow of EU Directives and regulations to clarify employers' responsibilities towards their employees has also influenced the move to diversity, particularly with the broadening of the scope of anti-discrimination legislation to include sexual orientation and religion or belief (2003) and age (2006) as well as amendments to the DDA.²

There is no doubt that the impact of the external political and legislative context has influenced UK-based international development organisations to think more seriously about diversity issues within their own organisations. Many organisations, including DFID, Oxfam UK and ActionAid UK have undertaken diversity audits of their own internal policies, practices and procedures. DFID cites many of the above political and legislative influences as factors behind the introduction their first **Annual Report on Diversity** in February 2004. The decision to appoint a Diversity Officer in Oxfam was taken around the time of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry (see Ojelay-Surtees, 2004). It is perhaps no coincidence that a 'Forum on Diversity' was held in 1998 to explore diversity issues within the international NGO sector (see Hunt and Wade, 1999).

In recent years, NCVO has spear-headed efforts to support UK-based voluntary sector organisations to understand the diversity agenda and has hosted a range of seminars, trainings and meetings to help organisations understand their own obligations with regard to equalities legislation. For some organisations, this has marked a departure from thinking about Equal Opportunities and a range of related human resources policies mainly from a gender perspective. For example, in ActionAid UK a review of HR policies and practices, recommended as part of a gender audit, brought the organisation face to face with the challenges of aligning internal policies and practices with proposed UK anti-discrimination as well as new legislation on flexible working, parental leave, etc. A diversity approach appeared more useful for achieving this than a focus only on gender and provoked further questioning about diversity issues within the organisation.

At the same time, assumptions about the 'natural' congruence between the social justice mandates of development organisations and their internal organisational cultures and practices – long questioned from a gender perspective – have been challenged as other movements grow in strength (see Hunt and Wade, 1999:26). One obvious example is the disability movement. The review commissioned by ADD (Yeo, 2003) looking at the inclusion of disabled people in international development work shows a startling lack of

¹ The Macpherson report defines institutional racism as "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviours which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people" (quoted in Horne, 2003).

² For more on the importance of political and legal developments as "drivers of diversity" for UK private and public sector organisations see Rutherford and Ollerearnshaw, 2002.

effort to include disabled people either among staff or beneficiaries. The personal experience of confronting ‘institutional racism’ in Oxfam GB has been bravely documented by the Diversity Adviser (see Ojelay-Surtees, 2004).

From the above we can see that external legal requirements for equal opportunities as well as pressure from stakeholders and activist groups have been important in raising the profile of certain strands of difference within UK-based international development organisations. For some organisations, this has meant thinking about other areas of diversity in addition to ongoing efforts to improve gender equality in the workplace. For others it has been an opportunity to think more seriously about all diversity issues. In some organisations the concern to ‘get their own house in order’ has prompted human resources departments to take more consolidated approaches to diversity, as we see below.

2.2 The influence of ‘organisational development’ approaches to diversity

Much confusion in debates on diversity stems from the fact the term diversity is used to describe an approach to organisational development and management emerging from experiences of working in multicultural environments. This approach has had considerable influence over the past decade within the US and the UK, initially in the private sector but more recently in the public and charity sectors. For this reason we have given some space to looking at this approach to diversity. This section outlines some of the main elements of an organisational development approach to diversity. Further details on specific diversity strategies in UK international development organisations will be given later in our discussion of the ‘institutionalisation’ of diversity.

Equal opportunities and diversity

As an organisational development approach, there are certain features that distinguish diversity from previous approaches. A distinction is often made between equal opportunities (EO) and diversity. The term ‘equal opportunities’ usually refers to laws and practices that are designed to remove barriers of discrimination (particularly in employment) experienced by certain groups. EO as an approach tends to be externally driven (e.g. legislation) and focuses on setting up human resource policies and procedures that protect these groups from discrimination, particularly in relation to recruitment.

Diversity is seen as a more positive approach that recognises and **values** the differences between people, seeking to harness the value-added that diverse people bring to an organisation in order to improve organisational performance. Differences tend to be more widely defined to include, for example, education, cultural and social backgrounds, work styles, knowledge, experiences, values and so on, in addition to definitions we have already seen such as gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability and religion. A diversity approach tends to be internally driven, the focus is on individual, business and organisational needs and there is a greater emphasis on creating an “inclusive” organisational culture.³ The emphasis is not just on recruiting people from different backgrounds (‘diversity enlargement’) but on retention of diverse staff because they feel respected, valued and motivated.

³ This distinction is described in Horne, 2003.

Changing organisational culture

While a diversity approach may be HR led, the aim is for it to be mainstreamed into the organisation and owned by all staff members. From a diversity perspective, a multilevel approach is required that addresses different types of organisational change: structural change, cultural change and behavioural change. The diversity ‘package’ tends to include many of the following strategies and approaches:

- developing a work culture of respect, equity and high morale
- linking diversity with the achievement of organisational mandate and goals
- promoting a healthy balance between professional and private lives (work-life balance)
- learning and developing skills, attitudes and behaviours that are supportive of diversity
- equality and diversity awareness-raising and training
- integrating diversity objectives into recruitment/retention, promotion/career development and training
- recognising and valuing different learning styles and ways of working
- rewarding leadership, creativity and innovation that promotes and celebrates diversity

There are many parallels with work around gender and organisational change.⁴ Some organisations (CARE International, CIGAR) describe their approach to diversity as an extension of their earlier work on gender equality while “developing new concepts, approaches, methods and tools to engage the more complex challenges of working effectively with multiple dimensions of diversity” (Merrill-Sands, 2000:vii)

From an organisational management perspective, however, there is considerable emphasis on making the “business case for diversity”. Business “drivers” of diversity often include reference to the changing profile of the workforce, which in the UK context means looking at ways to attract and retain women, people from ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, people of different ages, with caring responsibilities, etc. While not “diminishing the importance of equality and social justice in organisations” a diversity approach views differences in social identity “as an asset, rather than solely as a problem to be fixed” (Merrill-Sands et al., 2000:28). The following quote is from Thomas and Ely (1996:80), one of the seminal works on diversity as an organisational approach:

(Diverse staff) bring different, important, and competitively relevant knowledge and perspectives about how to actually do work – how to design processes, reach goals, frame tasks, create effective teams, communicate ideas, and lead. When allowed to, members of these groups can help companies grow and improve by challenging basic assumptions about an organisation’s functions, strategies, operations, practices, and procedures. And in doing so, they are able to bring more of their whole selves to the workplace and identify more fully with the work that they do, setting in motion a virtuous circle... Only when companies start

⁴ For an overview of work in this area see, for example, Macdonald et al. 1997.

thinking about diversity holistically – as providing fresh and meaningful approaches to work...will they be able to reap its full rewards.

Emphasis is placed on the valued-added diversity will bring to organisational creativity and innovation.

In the organisations consulted, where diversity is led from the human resources department, there is clearly an effort to think about diversity in relation to the achievement of broader organisational goals. VSO notes that “by understanding, respecting and using...differences, we can maximise our impact through meeting individual needs, increasing our problem-solving and creative ability and by staying in tune with the changing societies in which we work” (2003). The ‘business case’ for diversity in DFID is being developed with reference to similar arguments: a more diverse workforce will help the organisation to deliver its poverty-eradication programme by drawing on the insights and ideas of a wider range of people from the societies with which it works. Similar points are made by Oxfam. Within the development sector there is also reference to business benefits that diversity may bring in relation to attracting a more diverse base of supporters/stakeholders, with implications for fundraising, advocacy, campaigning and development education, for example.

Difference and discrimination – two sides of the diversity coin

It is worth noting that equal opportunities and diversity are meant to reinforce each other. To emphasise this, some UK public and private sector organisations use the term “equality and diversity” to describe their approach. However, there are concerns about the extent to which there is a tendency to ‘cross out equal opportunities and replace it with diversity.’ This is viewed as problematic where a diversity approach recognises and values difference in relation to promoting organisational goals (or productivity) without also making reference to tackling discrimination and the impact that power imbalances have on different communities, implicit in an equal opportunities approach.⁵

Organisational development approaches to diversity in international development organisations however, tend to take on board the issue of power relations and inequality. For Oxfam:

Whilst Diversity is about valuing the many sorts of differences that exist between people, there are also some groups who are particularly marginalised, socially excluded and denied equal rights. Therefore the strategy will be sensitive to the position of ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and women whilst seeking to create an environment where all differences are respected and cherished, as this brings benefits to everyone in the organisation (Oxfam’s Diversity Strategy, n.d.).

⁵ In fact, approaches to working with diversity vary widely in the extent to which they recognise power relations within their analyses and change strategies. Where the approach to diversity takes a “cognitive functional lens” – that is, emphasises differences in task-related knowledge, skills and experiences as well as in styles by which individuals access information and acquire knowledge” – power differentials tend to be downplayed. Where the emphasis is on social and cultural differences, there tends to be more of an attempt to address power relations, though this depends on the organisation (for a full discussion of difference approaches see Merrill-Sands et al., 2000).

Similarly for SC UK “approaches to diversity are not about treating everybody the same, but about recognising and valuing difference [and] recognising and countering inequality and discrimination.”

Given that international development organisations articulate mandates linked to social justice and fighting discrimination, marginalisation and so on, they are clearly more likely to be attentive to issues of power relations in their approach to diversity than many private sector institutions. Even so, this cannot be assumed, as the experience of working on gender and organisational change issues has demonstrated. The process of addressing power relations is a challenging one and involves staff members in breaking taboos about their own positions of power in relation to other colleagues, partners, and communities with which they work. The often painful yet transformative impact of this process is explored in a recent article on gender and diversity training (Plantenga, 2004).⁶ There is clearly much more work to be done to support development organisations in valuing difference and tackling discrimination and power relations internally.

Multiple forms of discrimination in the workplace

Some organisational development approaches to diversity also pay attention to multiple forms of discrimination experienced by staff members. One organisation consulted had a multiple discrimination policy in place (MRG). This is important. To understand diversity dynamics and work effectively with differences in organisations, it is necessary “to give explicit attention to the nexus between social differences and power relationships within the organisations and the larger society(ies) in which they are embedded” (Merrill-Sand et al. 2000:28). Merrill-Sand et al., for example, cite work illustrating the importance of paying attention to “the variability of experiences among people sharing one common dimension of identity such as gender, but differing in other dimensions such as ethnicity and race.”

Drawing on research in the United States and South Africa they illustrate how women of colour and working class women tend to be ‘disappeared’ in organisational change efforts aimed at promoting gender equity. They argue that “issues, experiences and concerns of white, middle-class, heterosexual and professional women have tended to capture the change agenda.” From this they draw the lesson “that when multiple identities are not attended to, the experiences of some groups inevitably become marginalized and silenced.” Similar research demonstrates that the experiences and priority concerns of women at upper and lower levels of the hierarchy in organisations are usually very different. Women at senior levels, for example, may focus on ‘glass ceiling’ issues of advancement, opportunities for mentoring and access to informal networks. Women at the lower levels, by contrast, may focus on issues of support for childcare, work schedule flexibility, sexual harassment and salary parity. Although not raised in this research, there are also issues of gender and generation to be considered: for example, older staff members may identify eldercare as a higher priority than childcare.

From the above it is possible to argue that an organisational development approach to diversity should not necessarily be perceived as a threat to gender mainstreaming.

⁶ See also the ActionAid (2001) report “Transforming Power” which looks at attempts to use participatory methods to address power relations **within** the organisation.

Indeed, if it has senior management support and is appropriately strategised, it could be potentially more effective than a gender and organisational change approach on its own. It may also provide a more complete picture of multiple forms of discrimination and how they are played out in the workplace. We explore these issues further below.

2.3 Moving towards more holistic approaches to poverty, discrimination and marginalisation

The factors influencing international development organisations to embrace diversity described above are largely UK or Northern-led and have particular implications regarding internal organisational practices. When asked about issues of diversity, however, many of those interviewed referred to what they do externally and gave examples of groups that they work with, for example ethnic minorities, older people, children and people with disabilities. Apart from single-issue organisations that focus on working with specific groups (e.g. HelpAge International, MRG, ADD, SC UK), the way in which other strands of difference are covered tends to be sporadic and uneven.

There were connections made however, between moves globally towards more holistic approaches to development and diversity. In part, such moves are a response to the perceived weaknesses of single-issue approaches on their own to fighting poverty, discrimination and marginalisation. This can be seen for example in relation to the rights-based approaches to development being taken up by many organisations.⁷ It is also evident in the related concept of ‘social inclusion’ and the efforts to take a more inclusive approach to development policy and practice. More holistic approaches are seen to provide a framework for looking at a wider range of differences as well as the interconnections among those areas of difference. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine these approaches in any detail, it is worth making a number of observations.

Rights-based approaches

Much is made of ‘the indivisibility of human rights’ (civil and political, economic, social and cultural) and the opportunities for using a rights-based framework for thinking more holistically about poverty, discrimination, exclusion and inequality (see IDS, 2003). It is interesting to note that in Amnesty International (AI), a wider diversity focus as regards internal organisational practice predates the political and legislative drivers for diversity identified above. The ‘Cultural Diversity and Equal Opportunities’ Policy has been in place since the early 1990s. The fact that a broad range of diversity issues have been on AI’s agenda for some time was explained in relation to the organisation’s rights-based approach and that it derives its mandate from Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁸

⁷ There are of course debates about how far RBA are Northern led (see Harris-Curtis, 2003). However, for many of the organisations consulted, thinking about RBA approaches is influenced by the experience of working with Southern partners and communities and is evolving through on-going dialogue with these groups.

⁸ Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

There is clearly potential for rights-based approaches to provide an entry point for getting a wide range of diversity issues on the development agenda.

[U]nderstanding that human rights are indivisible... means we need to talk about the diversity of human rights issues – age, class, culture, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation and other elements of identity – at the same time. We can no longer talk about race or age or gender in isolation from the other elements of identity. (Liddicoat, n.d.:12)

While recognising the potential of RBAs, concerns have nonetheless been voiced about tensions between “individual” and “collective rights” and about the ability of groups with the “loudest voices” to be in a stronger position “to claim their rights” (see IDS, 2003; Beales, 2003; Harris-Curtis, 2003). For rights-based approaches to be used as a way of promoting diversity issues, these concerns will need to be addressed.

Social inclusion

The importance of adopting more holistic or unified approaches is also implicit in discussions on social inclusion/exclusion. DFID has identified inclusion as a key pillar of its human rights strategy to achieve the MDGs. Its development policy and practice supports “building socially inclusive societies” based on the values of equality and non-discrimination, through development that promotes human rights for all people (quoted in Beales, 2003) For HelpAge International, “inclusive development practice means looking beyond sectors and instead towards understanding the relationships, contributions, and reciprocal arrangements that are at the heart of each family and community” (Beales, 2003:9). The importance of moving beyond sectoral approaches was also a key theme of recent workshop on mainstreaming and inclusive approaches in EU development policy which reflected on the implications of the EU decision not to work with target groups but “to take a wider approach to social inclusion and non-discrimination that ‘de facto’ mainstreamed all groups” (APRODEV, et al. 2004).

Jointly hosted by APRODEV, One World Action, WIDE, and HelpAge International, the workshop touched on a number of issues under the rubric of “gender and inclusion” that are pertinent to our discussion here. The workshop called for: “greater two-way interaction – for gender equality advocates/activists to ensure that they more systematically incorporate into their analysis the issues of ageing, ability/disability, minorities, children and for inclusion advocates/activists to ensure that they incorporate gender analysis more systematically into their thinking”. It was acknowledged that issues and sectors have been “compartmentalised” and that “NGOs at all levels need to work together more effectively on areas of complementarity and cross-cutting issues, and not to compete for resources or political attention (2004:34)”.

What happens to gender?

Moves to more holistic frameworks that subsume gender equality have not been entirely welcomed by gender activists and practitioners. For some there is a fear that the focus is too broad and that gender will inevitably get lost. Debates at ACORD a few years ago considered whether gender should be treated as a separate strand (conceptually and in practice) or as a sub-category of social exclusion. While there was recognition that subsuming gender into the category of social exclusion would permit a more holistic

analysis of sex discrimination (as well as give due recognition to the existence of a many other forms of discrimination) there were fears that “sexism” as a concern would be subsumed by a myriad of other “isms” and that the specificity of women’s subordination would get lost (ACORD, 2001). The implications for the ‘status’ of gender equality work in relation to a wider rights-based approach – where gender equality is essentially perceived as a sub-set within the rights framework – was raised in a number of interviews. While in many cases, gender is likely to continue as a thematic approach for programme work, there were questions about whether it should be identified as a specific issue within the broader rights framework – “the indivisibility of rights means that it would be inappropriate to focus on a single strand” was noted by DFID.

Another issue of concern is the tension between collective rights and individual rights that are inevitably played out in debates on gender and diversity. The impact of 9/11 and the global “war on terror” and with them the renewed assertions of political, cultural and religious differences have added considerably to the tensions between notions of collective and individual rights and there are concerns that women’s rights will loose out at the expense of cultural rights (see Sweetman, 2004). One of the questions that has emerged in these debates is the role that international development organisations can play in mediating between competing rights and interests and what support staff members will need for doing this (see discussion in van der Hoogte and Kingma, 2004).

2.4 Intersectionality

To complicate things further, in some contexts, particularly when organisations and individuals are looking specifically at gender issues, the term ‘diversity’ is almost synonymous with ‘intersectionality’. This approach is being used explicitly in some contexts to think about the interface between gender and diversity, so has been covered here in some detail. Below is a definition of the term emerging from discussions in United Nations fora:

*An **intersectional approach** to analysing the disempowerment and marginalisation of women attempts to capture the consequences of the interaction between two or more forms of subordination. It addresses the manner in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression and other discriminatory systems create inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, class and the like...[R]acially subordinated women are often positioned in the space where racism or xenophobia, class and gender meet. UN, 2001, quoted in Riley, 2003: 1-2.*

The recognition that systems of discrimination interweave to have a multiple impact on women is not new (see Riley, 2003 for examples). What is new in the concept of intersectionality “is the attempt to bring together structural and dynamic dimensions of the interplay between aspects of discrimination”. The metaphor of roads and traffic has been developed to elucidate this point:

*The roads are the axes of power/subordination (patriarchy, racial hierarchy and class system) that **structure** the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities and classes. The traffic on these axes/roads is made up of the specific acts and*

*policies that create burden, or the **dynamic** aspects of disempowerment. Marginalised women are located ‘in the cross roads’ where two or more axes intersect. Here they are subject to a ‘heavy flow of traffic’ from two directions, increasing the risk of ‘accidents’ (from Crenshaw 2000 cited in Riley, 2003:14).*

From this perspective, it is recognised that intersectional subordination is often invisible, with women experiencing multiple forms of discrimination being inadequately addressed by either gender or race discrimination frameworks. The result is likely to be either “over-inclusion” or “under-inclusion”:

- “over-inclusion” occurs when a problem is presented as gender subordination without consideration of the simultaneous racial or ethnic subordination” (e.g. trafficking in women)
- “under-inclusion” is said to occur when a subset of women experience a problem that is not seen as gendered, because it is not the experience of women from the dominant groups (e.g. sterilisation) (Riley, 2003:14-15).

Although rooted in theoretical work emerging out of attempts to understand the experiences of women of colour in the US, it has more recently been taken up by Southern feminists and activists. It is described as having more relevance than Western feminism for Southern women whose experience is more of differences among women, between rural and urban women and between women of different classes. It brings to the fore the reality that women can find themselves “caught between the politics of race and class.”⁹

The concept of intersectionality first appeared on the international agenda in relation to the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Intolerance (Durban, South Africa 2001). Before and during the meeting, pressure from women’s rights activists and theorists helped to bring to the fore a number of key issues. These included, for example, the importance of taking an intersectional approach to gender and race discrimination to help uncover women’s multiple experience of discrimination so that it can be more effectively tackled at the policy level in a way that avoids stigmatising or homogenising specific groups. Intersectionality also involves taking into account that fact that women’s lived realities may involve a constant negotiation between obligations to their social or ethnic groups’ interests and their gender needs.

In this connection, Sweetman (2004) makes an interesting observation regarding the failure to distinguish “women’s interests” with “women’s gender interests” in the context of development policy and practice. As she notes, “Maxine Molyneux originally developed the concept of gender interests to describe the interests that women share due to their biological sex and gender identity in a particular society”. Particular women also possess interests according to class, age, caste, and so on, in addition to their gender

⁹ Riley (2003) provides a good summary of some of the key literature related to intersectionality theory, including Kimberley Crenshaw’s “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Colour”, in the July 1991 edition of the *Stanford Law Review*. We can only present a schematic summary of the main ideas here.

interests. Women's interests extend far beyond the gender interests that they share with other women. Indeed women's interests as part of an ethnic group or social class may clash with their gender interests.

Activists and theorists have also raised concerns about debates on multiculturalism and its "liberal underpinnings of tolerance and respect for diversity". Pragna Patel, of the London-based NGO Southall Black Sisters, while commending underlying notions of respect and tolerance for minorities nonetheless identifies multiculturalism "as a site where the intersection of race and gender discrimination is complex and 'insidious'" (see Patel, 2001). Using examples from her work with Asian women in Britain, she argues that "their experiences are seen through a mutually exclusive checklist of discrimination". The danger of this approach is that the strategies adopted to address discrimination have the paradoxical effect of reinforcing certain forms of discrimination that remain hidden (e.g. domestic violence). In addition to language barriers and cultural constraints that demand women's obedience for the sake of upholding family honour, many state policies designed to respect and tolerate diversity and difference have the effect of compounding the discrimination women face in their homes and their communities.

Insights from intersectional analysis may also bring into focus differences **within** different strands of diversity. The literature tends to concentrate on highlighting differences among women. Yet there are also differences among people with disabilities, among people of ethnic minorities, of different ages, of different sexual orientations, etc. that are played out in relation to access to resources, focus of policies and political voice.¹⁰

Intersectionality and gender mainstreaming

Intersectional analysis is being taken up by feminist theorists and women's rights activists to examine every identity that women experience and to understand how these identities intersect to produce discrimination and marginalisation. As many women's rights advocates now argue:

[W]omen's multiple, varied and layered identities require us to understand [that] what works to advance some women's rights access to opportunities and the exercise of human rights will not necessarily work for other more marginalised women. (Darling, 2002).

This means that in the context of gender mainstreaming "what empowers relatively socially privileged women will not work to empower deeply marginalised and socially excluded women and girls" (Darling, 2002).

The 'GAD and Intersectionality' conference held by the International Women's Development Agency (Australia) in July 2003 considered the implications of insights emerging from intersectional analysis. The conclusion of the conference was that "[g]ender mainstreaming as currently practised does not account for the diversity of

¹⁰ For an interesting reading on this see Ward's (2004) account of the experience of lesbians of colour in relation to access to information on HIV/AIDs prevention and education.

women” (IWDA 2003:3). Nevertheless, in the wide ranging debate and discussion it was also noted that:

[T]here may well be benefits in developing a more comprehensive gender mainstreaming tool that not only accounts for the differential impact of policy and programs on women and men but also accounts for other modes of subordination. This could result in a gender mainstreaming strategy that is more relevant and more contextual, more attuned to the reality ‘on the ground’, and thus more transformative and more effective in achieving development goals (Riley, 2003:17-18)

There is clearly a need to take a harder look at gender mainstreaming from a wider diversity perspective. It is worth noting that while ‘intersectionality’ is not yet widely included in the discourse around diversity within UK-based NGOs, there is some awareness of the need to take on board the idea of women’s experience of multiple discrimination (e.g. MRG; ActionAid; AI; HelpAge International). The GAD Network review of gender equality and mainstreaming in policy and practice of DFID recommended the need for “analysis of intersections between gender discrimination and other forms of discrimination” (Macdonald, 2003) though as yet there does not appear to be a commitment to look at multiple forms of discrimination in any systematic way. There are, of course, examples from the organisations consulted of looking at the intersection of two strands of difference/identity (e.g. race and gender; gender and disability; gender and age) but much more could be done.

2.5 Summary

The discussion of key trends and ideas influencing debates on diversity has tried to show that the term is being used in a variety of ways by international development organisations. Foremost among these is the organisational development approach. Diversity is also part of the discourse surrounding a range of other concepts and frameworks including more unified or holistic approaches such as rights-based approaches and social inclusion. Clearly more work needs to be done to understand how these different frameworks and concepts fit (or do not fit) together.¹¹ And related to this, more research and analysis is needed to understand the interface between gender and other forms of diversity.

In particular, a number of issues warrant further discussion and debate:

- Is there a need for greater clarity on how the term diversity is being used?
- How can ‘twin-tracked’ approaches to diversity be supported (i.e. valuing difference **and** addressing power relations, inequality and discrimination)?
- How can competition/hierarchies of interest between different groups within the workplace be avoided (e.g. organisational approaches to diversity targeting specific groups may unwittingly contradict holistic and inclusive approaches)?

¹¹ There is currently a process underway in CARE International to look at how various frameworks used by the organisation fit together (livelihoods, gender and diversity, rights-based approaches, advocacy, etc.).

- What happens when diversity shifts from an organisational development approach to a programming approach?
- Can rights-based approaches provide a framework for looking at a wider range of diversity issues?
- How can a focus on specific areas of difference (e.g. gender, disability, age, ethnicity) be maintained within more unified or holistic approaches to development?
- Do current approaches to gender mainstreaming need to be strengthened to account for the diversity among women and for other areas of difference?
- How useful is an intersectional approach?

This section has looked primarily at conceptual frameworks and issues. The next section considers what happens when diversity is ‘institutionalised.’

3. Institutionalising diversity: some key issues

From the previous section, it should be apparent that many development organisations are under pressure to get their own houses in order with regard to diversity. At the same time, the convergence of a number of factors has prompted organisations to think in a more joined-up way about various strands of difference. These influences have encouraged rethinking about the institutional strategies and structures for addressing difference. This has gone further in many organisations with regard to internal organisational issues than with programming. For both areas it is too early to look in any systematic way at the impact on gender mainstreaming.

However, a number of issues and concerns are being raised which we consider below: these include questions about resources, staffing and expertise, and methodologies and practical tools, not to mention fears about the emergence of hierarchies of interests within organisations. These concerns apply across the various strands of difference – though for gender advocates who have fought long and hard for the institutionalisation of gender, the addition of new issues to be mainstreamed may seem particularly threatening. Interestingly, many parallels can be made with the move to a single equalities body in the UK. Before looking specifically at the development sector, we consider the debates around the single equalities body as it offers useful insights and recommendations.

3.1 Unified approaches to tackling equality and diversity: reflections on the proposed UK single equalities body

In October 2003 the UK government announced its intention to create a new Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). In part, the single equalities body is seen as an alternative to creating new single issue bodies (e.g. on age, sexual orientation, religion) to join the existing Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission. The idea is that the new Commission will replace the current equalities bodies and “operate as a unified body, giving equal weight to all equalities interests” (Women and Equalities Unit, 2003). A consultation process –

“Equality and Diversity: Making it Happen” – is currently underway on the power, responsibilities and structure of the proposed CEHR. While operating at quite different levels, the debate around the CEHR provides some useful insights with regard to developing structures supportive of a more unified approach to equality and diversity.

The Equalities Coalition (2004) has produced a summary of the voluntary sector views on the CEHR which includes the identification of key elements to make the CEHR work effectively. On resource issues the point is made that to avoid the perception that a single equalities body is merely a cost-cutting exercise (a concern that has been raised by women’s rights activists), the new body should have a greater budget than the combined budgets of the current bodies given that it needs to work effectively on a much broader set of issues. In addition, resources across the different strands must be allocated according to need, with the suggestion that techniques such as gender budgeting might be useful in this context. Without going into the specifics of perceived weaknesses in the current legislative framework, another key area of concern is the importance of ensuring that the different stakeholders feel they are coming to the CEHR as equals. For this to happen, the overall legislative framework must provide equal protection and equal powers for each strand of difference. Otherwise there is a danger that a hierarchy of interests will emerge (EOC, 2004:10).

A single equalities body also needs a “shared, fully articulated vision of equality”. This vision, it is argued, “should encompass a broad concept of equality, beyond the six ‘strands’, and integrate an understanding of human rights and equality” (Equalities Coalition, 2004:2). With regard to “multiple discrimination”, at a strategic level it is important to ensure that “the needs of each strand don’t preclude the adoption of a cross-strand approach which would enable people to assert their rights in relation to discrimination based on more than one aspect of their identity” (quoted from National Aids Trust, Equalities Coalition, 2004:3).

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) identifies a number of risks involved in moving to a single equality body:

- the emergence of implicit or explicit hierarchies
- conflicting agendas between the strands
- the loss of focus on single strand issues and
- the absence of specialist expertise to tackle them effectively

However, the EOC supports the creation of a single equalities body in part because it “will have the best chance of delivering effective work across all areas of equality on all the necessary levels, i.e. single strand issues, generic equality issues and inter-sectional or multiple discrimination issues”. EOC research on gender and poverty and on multiple identity and discrimination demonstrates that “sex equality is an increasingly subtle and complex issue that cannot be effectively tackled using a single model of what it is about” (EOC, 2004:1). Many of the EOC recommendations with regard to prerequisites for making the CEHR work mirror those outlined in the Equalities Coalition position paper. As we can see, there are some parallels to be drawn between concerns and recommendations surrounding the CEHR and those that have emerged in relation to moves towards more unified approaches in other contexts.

3.2 Institutionalising diversity in international development organisations

It is important to emphasize that these discussions are only just beginning for many organisations. A few reflections on gender and diversity can be made, nonetheless.

Diversity policies and strategies

Several of the development organisations consulted have developed diversity policies and strategies or are in the process of doing so (e.g. DFID, Oxfam, ActionAid, VSO). These policies and strategies have been influenced by the organizational development approaches to diversity outline above. In other words, in addition to seeking to broaden the diversity of staff, there is emphasis on changing the culture of the organisation in ways that are supportive of diversity. As we have noted, there are parallels with work around gender and organisational change. In some contexts (e.g. DFID) the term ‘mainstreaming diversity’ is being used.¹²

For smaller organisations, there has been less of a focus on putting in place diversity policies or strategies. Existing human resources practices, however, often seek to address diversity issues in relation to recruitment, performance review, etc. While some organisations consulted claimed that they did not use the term diversity, “valuing difference” is part of their organisational approach (e.g. HelpAge International). As noted above, MRG has a “multiple discrimination policy” which covers both internal workings and looks at diversity within the minority communities with which it works.

Where there are explicit diversity policies and strategies these tend to cover mainly internal organisational issues with little reference to programme work, except to assert that greater diversity in staffing will contribute to a greater understanding of the societies in which the organisation works. For some organisations, particularly highly decentralised organisations, the diversity strategy has not yet been applied beyond the UK offices (e.g. Oxfam, ActionAid). Given some of the key push factors for organisational strategies on diversity raised above (UK political pressure, legislative frameworks, etc) there are questions to be raised about how such policies are rolled out in country programmes and the kinds of targets set. At a minimum there is a need for country or region specific analyses of the situation with regard to equality and diversity as a guide for diversity strategies beyond the UK level. Concerns about the appropriateness of ‘global diversity policies’ raised at the INTRAC seminar on diversity issues within the international NGO sector in 1998 (Hunt and Wade, 1999) have still to be addressed for many organisations. Interestingly, DFID’s work on diversity covers all staff, including those appointed in-country. Several departments and country offices have developed their own diversity strategies (see DFID, 2004, Annex E for interesting examples from Nepal and Zambia).

Managing the different strands of diversity: what happens to gender?

Although they are seen to reinforce each other, there was a lack of clarity emerging from the interviews about how diversity policies/strategies link to existing gender policies or

¹² See Squires 2003 for a theoretical analysis of why gender mainstreaming should become diversity mainstreaming.

disability policies (where they exist). Interestingly, the Oxfam Diversity Strategy makes no reference to the Oxfam Gender Policy though this may relate to perceptions that the former has an internal focus and the latter a programmatic focus. There was some discussion in the interviews around the extent to which specific policies on each area of difference are necessary and the possibility of policy ‘overload’ was highlighted. However, the symbolic importance that separate policies can have for different groups was raised in relation to the GLA’s decision to have a series of separate equality schemes to reflect diverse groups of the population.¹³ The need for more international development organisations to develop disability policies is an issue on the agenda of the disability movement, for example. A mapping study of disability policies within development organisations is currently underway.¹⁴ There are ongoing efforts to mainstream a focus on disability within DFID (see ODG, 2004) as well as advocacy to promote greater attention to ageing, disability and minority rights, for example through the development of guidelines in EU policy making (see Beales, 2003).

No doubt many interest groups, including those focusing on gender equality, will have questions about the extent to which an umbrella diversity policy/strategy is sufficient to ensure that their concerns will be addressed. As noted in discussions on the CEHR, it is clearly important for all players to feel they come to the table as equals. Where gender policies already exist, this may mean introducing further specific policies around other areas of diversity. Gender advocates within organisations, with their knowledge and history of attempts to institutionalise gender, could potentially be allies on this if they feel secure that their own issues are not being displaced.

It is worth noting however, that for many organisations, internally focused diversity strategies tend to single out specific priority areas for attention. In this context, there is evidence that gender has moved down the agenda and some interviewees admitted as much. DFID cites disability as its current main area of focus in respect of diversity and it was noted that there are perceptions within the organisation that gender issues had been dealt with to a large extent. ActionAid’s diversity audit also identifies disability as the area that should receive particular attention in its diversity strategy and action plan. The Corporate Diversity Strategy of VSO identifies ethnicity and disability as two priority areas. Oxfam, on the other hand, is currently focusing its attention on race diversity. Although it was not raised explicitly in the interviews, there is scope for gender issues to be raised in each of the areas of focus identified above.

A diversity approach may have some advantages in terms of promoting gender equality issues internally as noted above. For example, placing performance on gender in the broader framework of performance on diversity may help to dispel the impression that women’s interests are being advanced to the detriment of other groups. One example, is DFID’s **Annual Diversity Report** which includes an assessment of performance with regard to gender and outlines specific actions in response to problem areas. In the context of overall commitments to diversity this may have greater weight than previous

¹³ Equality target groups include: women; disabled people; black people and people from minority ethnic communities; older people; young people and children; lesbians; gay men and bisexuals; trans people; and people of different faith groups. Gender Equality Scheme, GLA n.d.

¹⁴ Part of the KAR programme (disability and health care technology) funded by DFID.

calls for improved recruitment of women and greater representation of women in senior grades.

For UK-based NGOs, efforts in human resources teams to better understand diversity (prompted by the increase in anti-discrimination legislation) has also led to greater attention with regard to monitoring and evaluating performance on diversity. Importantly, for some organisations this has helped to provide a more nuanced understanding of how women staff are faring. For example, in ActionAid UK, gender disaggregated data on staffing indicated that women were performing well at higher levels of the organisation. However, a more detailed analysis of the HR data revealed that ethnic minority women were less well-represented at senior management level than ethnic-minority men and non-ethnic minority women. This had not been picked up as an issue in previous gender audits on staffing. Again, the potential of a broader diversity approach for picking up multiple forms of discrimination should be highlighted.

Diversity training

We have not looked specifically at the issue of diversity training, though there is much that could be explored with further research particularly, with regard to the issue of whether umbrella diversity training could substitute for specific training sessions on gender, disability, race and ethnicity, HIV/AIDS and so on. DFID, Oxfam, Christian Aid and ActionAid have all undertaken diversity training. In most cases this training focuses on awareness-raising about the overall UK legislative context (anti-discrimination legislation) and training on skills, attitudes and behaviours that are supportive of diversity. The experience within ActionAid was that it was possible to look at broad issues of discrimination but very difficult in short sessions to explore specifics around each area of difference or how they intersect. Oxfam and DFID have undertaken specific disability training and Oxfam is planning to introduce sessions on ageing and sexual orientation. Dorine Plantenga, a gender trainer based in The Hague, argues for specially designed gender and diversity training to support the design and implementation of a gender and diversity policy. She advises that the following concepts should be included as a minimum package of core training sessions: gender, identity, power, systems of exclusion and inclusion, change and transformation (2003:46). Again this would be worth exploring in more detail as international development organisation roll out their diversity strategies.

Diversity approaches in programme work

While some organisations speak about applying an organisational development approach to diversity more broadly to include programme work (Oxfam, DFID), very little has been done so far. “Gender and Diversity” is one of five overarching programme aims for Oxfam. However, gender is perceived to be higher on the organisational agenda than broader diversity issues at the programme level. This is in part a strategic decision about the need for focus in the short term: there is still considerable work to be done on gender mainstreaming, particularly at looking at mainstreaming issues of violence against women, within broader programme work. While there are pockets of work going on in relation to broader diversity issues across the organisation (the MEEECIS programme and the UK poverty programme were two examples given), there is not as systematic an approach as with gender.

SC UK is unique among the organisations consulted in that its focus is mainly on **promoting diversity in programming**. The organisation is currently developing an overall diversity framework, within the context of child rights programming, from which will flow specific tools for raising awareness of diversity issues and for planning effective project work to tackle discrimination. Within the diversity framework, there will continue to be a specific focus on gender, ethnicity (in relation to territorial minorities, linguistic and cultural minorities, migrants and refugees and indigenous and tribal peoples as appropriate) and disability. The push for an overall diversity framework derives from the view that a unified approach to dealing with discrimination will be most effective.

Within several of the organisations consulted there is evidence that a greater range of diversity issues are being raised in the context of programming work, in response to debates and issues raised above. ADD is taking on board a greater focus on gender and disability for example. MRG looks at how issues of gender, age and disability affect people from minority communities. For MRG, diversity is not seen as a distraction from core minority rights issues, rather it helps to bring into focus the issues of diversity and the complexities of experience within minority communities. At Care International which takes a gender and diversity approach to organisational development, there has been an effort to spell out guidelines on gender and diversity in relation to the organisation's programming principles. This is part of the attempt to 'cross the boundary' between programming and internal organisation issues.

Diversity posts and expertise

There is little evidence to suggest that gender officers are currently being displaced by diversity officers. It is hoped that the recent appointment of the Gender and Rights Adviser at DFID may help to strengthen the case for gender-specific posts in other organisations. There are new posts of diversity officers/co-ordinators in place (or planned) in a number of organisations consulted (DFID, ActionAid, Oxfam, VSO). The diversity officers are located within Human Resources teams. The case of SC UK is an exception. During a recent restructuring process it was decided to phase out the Gender Adviser post. A new post of Diversity Adviser was created and is located in the Policy and Learning Team, to build on specialist work on both gender and diversity and as noted above, to build a diversity framework for programming. The team also retains a half time disability adviser.

Apart from a two year project-linked post of Disability Policy Officer in DFID (working with both the Gender and Rights Adviser and the Diversity Adviser), no other organisation reported to have any specific posts on other areas of diversity. In addition to its gender staff, Oxfam has appointed a number of Gender and Diversity Officers in regional programmes.¹⁵ However, the management and recruitment process for these posts suggest that there is some freedom to focus the work either on gender or other areas of diversity. One current post-holder is the informal focal point for the organisation on disability in programme work.

¹⁵ There are also Gender and Representation Officers within the Humanitarian Department.

A number of points were raised regarding the issue of diversity posts. In most cases, where diversity officers are located in human resources, it is important for effective lines of communication and collaboration with gender officers or other staff working on diversity issues to be established. Where diversity officers are located in programming departments and have a broad remit for all areas of diversity, it will be important to ensure that there are either in-house specialists or trusted external consultants to provide support on specific areas of diversity. Lessons from the gender mainstreaming experience may be of relevance here (see Derbyshire, 2002). For issues to stay on the agenda, even in the context where organisational commitment is present in the form of gender policies, etc., there need to be people with specific responsibility to push that agenda forward. If there is a move towards diversity posts with a more unified remit, it will be important to think through the skills, background and support needed. In particular, they will need guidance on how to manage the potentially competing interests in their day to day work, not least in relation to potential clashes between cultural rights and traditions and women's rights.

Frameworks, methodologies and tools

One issue emerging from the debates on diversity is the idea that common analytical frameworks can be used in programming to both define problems and find solutions to discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, disability or other factors (Csaky and Hyder, 2004:2). It is widely recognised that gender analysis frameworks have been quite well-developed (compared to tools for other diversity issues) and are being used across a variety of development institutions. Can they be adapted for use more widely across other areas of diversity? For some, there are possibilities to build on lessons learnt from gender mainstreaming and gender analysis. Others argue that there is no reason to assume that factors that cause gender inequality are the same for other forms of inequality. What is required is to establish a greater understanding of the “analytical elements” important for other structural inequalities and to develop more knowledge and practices on the intersection of gender and other inequalities (Verloo: 2001:21-22). This discussion is only just beginning but a few observations can be made.

The most basic introduction to gender analysis begins with the assertion that women are not a homogenous group. Nonetheless, this observation appears to get lost in application. Gender analysis frameworks have been relatively weak tools for looking at other areas of diversity. This point has been made in the context of criticism of gender analysis and mainstreaming emerging from intersectional analysis. It also is clear from Oxfam's review of gender-analysis frameworks (March, et. al, 1999). The Oxfam review looks at:

- the Harvard Analytical Framework and People-Oriented Planning;
- the Moser Framework;
- the Gender Analysis Matrix (GAM);
- the Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis Framework;
- Women's Empowerment (Longwe) Framework; and
- the Social Relations Approach.

Each framework is assessed (among other things) on the extent to which it incorporates an analysis of social relations which goes beyond issues of gender. Only the Social Relations Approach, which in itself is not a gender-specific approach, is seen to recognise and highlight the interacting and cross-cutting inequalities of class, gender, race and so on. Other frameworks are described as having the potential for adaptation to address other areas of difference.

There have been some efforts to develop gender tools that take into account other areas of diversity. For example, the WILD for Human Rights “Draft Guidelines for Race and Gender Analysis” (Liddcoat, n.d.), which take on board an intersectional analysis, are being used by Novib for their ability to capture other areas of diversity. The Care International Gender Equity Building Blocks make an effort to sustain a gender and diversity approach throughout the toolkit (2002). Care UK has also recently been working on a rights-based monitoring tool for discrimination (drawing on analyses of the relative merits of methodologies for looking at discrimination and those for looking at inclusion) which includes gender as a central part of its approach (2004). AI has developed an “identities-based framework” for looking at intersectional discrimination and is currently working on methodologies for operationalising this framework. There has also been an attempt (see Bolt and Bird, 2003) to adapt tools and concepts from the main gender analysis frameworks noted above in order to develop more holistic approaches to capturing other areas of diversity and differentiation at the household level (“age and birth order, relationship to household head, illness, disability [sic], incapacity, and so on”). Without a fuller analysis it is difficult to make an assessment of these various frameworks and methodologies but there is clearly much more research needed on the adaptability of existing frameworks.

As regards building organisational capacity more broadly, there are some interesting insights from a seminar on gender and diversity in Latin America supported by Novib and Hivos (described in van der Hoogte and Kingma, 2004). The inspiration for the workshop grew out the acknowledgement that they needed to better understand the impact of multiple identities on discrimination and to develop organisational capacity to address this in their programme work. To narrow down the theme of gender and diversity, the workshop focussed on the intersection of ethnicity and gender. The seminar recognised that the intersection can be approached by focusing on gender-based inequality, or by focusing on the cultural rights of minority communities. Two overarching dilemmas were identified in relation to this particular gender and cultural diversity nexus: the tension between collective and individual rights highlighted above and the fact that cultural difference and discrimination leads to social hierarchy and segregation in many regions.

These dilemmas, it was argued, have consequences for our daily practice as development workers and need to be recognised and addressed in a transparent way. The question posed was how to ensure that everyone’s rights are respected, in relation to these two key dilemmas. (see van der Hoogte and Kingma, 2004). The following conclusions were reached:

- the struggle of indigenous women is not only about gender issues but about culture, ethnicity or race, class as well;

- for all these areas to be addressed, strategies need to be more holistic;
- the ‘cultural relativist’ attitudes of NGO staff need changing; and
- NGOs must think and work long-term if power relations and social and gender hierarchies are to be changed.

Participatory approaches

There is also a need to look more closely at the opportunities provided by participatory frameworks to raise wider diversity issues as well as to draw attention to the intersection of identities. In order to capture and respond to multiple forms of discrimination, it is important to provide space for individuals to explore their own layers of identity and to self-prioritise them in terms of needs and interest. HelpAge International for example, has highlighted this point in relation to its approach:

Participation is an approach that values the skills, knowledge, and opinions of older people and other groups. It enables us to appreciate the diversity between groups, understand structural relationships, and seek partnerships in promoting the rights and aspirations of older people. The process of participation can be challenging, often involves conflict, and can require change in attitudes as well as practice. It helps create programmes responsive to change. (HelpAge International, 2000:1)

The potential of participatory approaches for addressing the multiple dimensions of women’s identities has also been observed:

Effectively addressing gender inequality requires a detailed assessment of the specifics of the context...if all aspects that affect a women’s reality are to be appropriately considered, women must be enabled to tell their own stories so that their concerns and context can be understood from their perspective (IWDA, 2003).

Again, there is a need for greater understanding of the ways in which participatory approaches can be used to support a greater diversity of voices in development at all levels. There is already a body of work exploring the opportunities and challenges with regard to gender and participatory development, which may be a useful starting point (see, for example, Cornwall, 2001).

3.3 Summary

As observed above, many organisations are only just beginning to institutionalise diversity. In most contexts the current focus is on internal diversity issues. Nonetheless, there are questions regarding broader diversity issues (beyond gender) being asked in relation to programme work. The current effort in SC UK is one example, though even where an explicit diversity approach is absent, many other organisations are tackling the challenges of managing the tension between the widening of the diversity agenda and calls for more unified or holistic approaches. The discussion in this section has tried to build on that in the previous section. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify some further issues that need to be addressed in ongoing debates about diversity:

- Is it important to ensure that organisational diversity policies and strategies are context specific (i.e. as they are rolled out beyond the UK offices)?
- How can organisations work better to bring a diverse range of issues to the table with the core aim of fighting discrimination (and avoid hierarchies of interest and competition between groups)?
- Are twin-tracked approaches to institutionalising diversity needed (i.e. measures focusing on single strand issues **and** efforts to more unified or holistic approaches)?
- How can constructive thinking about generic equality issues (poverty, discrimination, marginalisation) and inter-sectional or multiple discrimination issues be facilitated?
- Can participation and participatory approaches be used to promote greater diversity in development?
- As gender advocates, how can we ensure that gender does not disappear off the agenda as new areas added (e.g. ongoing need for specific posts, targeted research, projects, advocacy)?
- How can current gender analysis frameworks be strengthened and adapted to better account for the intersection between difference sources of discrimination?
- What lessons from the experience of implementing gender mainstreaming can be used to support groups that are seeking to mainstream other areas of diversity?
- How can we address the criticism that a singular focus on equality for women may promote inequalities in other areas?

4. The way forward in debates on gender and diversity

This paper has tried to make sense of the current debates around diversity, with a specific focus on gender and diversity. In doing so, it has perhaps raised more questions than provided answers. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the synthesis of current literature, the attempt to disentangle some of the debates and the highlighting of key issues that need to be resolved will make a contribution to ongoing discussions within international development organisations.

In the summaries of the two main sections of this paper there has been an attempt to identify some issues that the members of the GAD Network may wish to explore further (see sections 2.5 and 3.3). An important challenge ahead is, as one interviewee observed, “to get different areas of diversity speaking to one other”. Of course, this is already beginning to happen, as we have seen above, especially in the context of EU lobbying around issues of social inclusion. But much more needs to be done. Perhaps there is a role for the GAD Network to play in this regard?

ANNEX 1

Terms of Reference for a GAD Network "Think Piece" on Gender and Diversity

Background:

There is clearly interest among Network members to learn more about the current emphasis on "Diversity" across UK organisations (private, public as well as voluntary sector) and what implications this might have for gender mainstreaming. Policy makers, academics and practitioners are already beginning to address this issue from the perspective of changes within UK government machinery, namely the setting up of the new single equality body, The Equalities and Human Rights Commission, and in relation to new UK diversity legislation. For the GAD Network, there are specific issues or factors that need to be considered about how Diversity being interpreted and taken on board by UK-based international development organisations. How is gender mainstreaming being taken forward in the diversity debate and approach?

Purpose of the "Think Piece":

Simply put, the main purpose of this paper is to consider "What is happening to gender in the Diversity debate?" What opportunities are provided by the current emphasis on Diversity for gender mainstreaming? What are the constraints and challenges posed by the focus on Diversity? And what key issues are emerging that demand the attention of the GAD Network?

The Think Piece will provide a basis for:

- (1) information sharing and capacity building among network members
- (2) identifying issues for advocacy work with government and other decision-making bodies

The Think Piece will be used as a resource for the second phase of activities (in the first quarter of 2004) involving meeting(s) on "Gender and Diversity" organised by the GAD Network, with the participation of Diversity experts and trainers.

Substantive issues to be addressed:

The Gender and Diversity Working Group has identified a number of issues that the "Think Piece" might address.

Conceptual issues

- There appears to be some confusion over terminology -- is "Diversity" something new or is it a way of describing something that we are already doing?
- Who is driving the agenda? And is thinking around Diversity dominated by the UK legislative context or are there signs that it is developing with a Southern perspective?

Organisational issues

- Is the current trend towards "Diversity" (and appointment of Diversity Officers) primarily an administrative issue?
- How far is it being integrated as an internal (HR) approach and/or as an approach to training? to programming? How far does it privilege or de-politicise power relations?

- Is it inevitable that there will be a "hierarchy of issues" emerging within the competition for resources? Does this depend on the area of "expertise" of the Diversity Officer? How can there be a balance between different strands of equality to make sure gender doesn't lose out?

Programmatic issues

- What are the opportunities offered by "diversity" approach/single diversity officer/body for doing proper social relations analysis and tackling multiple disadvantages that women experience? What are the constraints of placing responsibility for all diversity issues within the hands of one unit/staff member?
- Gender analysis tools are further developed than many other equality strands - what opportunities are there for sharing approaches?

Methodology:

It is proposed that the "Think Piece" will involve three stages:

Stage 1 (5 days): A literature review of existing information/research relevant to the substantive issues raised above. The scope for the literature review should move beyond the development sector to consider relevant information from other sectors as well as academic research. For example, current debates over the new UK equality body may provide insights regarding institutional arrangements, as should academic work looking at conceptual issues related to gender and diversity. GAD Network members will share any material they deem pertinent to this stage of the research.

Stage 1 will identify gaps in information/issues that require follow-up interviews for Stage 2.

Stage 2: (3 days) Follow-up interviews for purposes of filling gaps/clarifying issues. This might include some of the development organisations that have appointed Diversity officers and have/are developing diversity strategies (e.g. ActionAid, Oxfam, Save the Children, MRG, CARE) as well as organisations in other sectors that might help clarify issues regarding gender and diversity. Again, GAD Network members will provide support in the form of identifying contacts and helping to set up interviews.

Stage 3: (5 days) Writing the paper, integrating material from the literature review and follow-up research. Paper to be circulated for comments to Gender and Diversity Group members. Revision of paper based on comments (2 days).

Expected Output:

The format of the "Think Piece" will include a synthesis of current research/thinking on the issues raised above. In addition, it will clearly identify challenges and constraints as well as opportunities for promoting gender within the Diversity debate.

The paper will be a maximum of 20 pages and will include an Executive Summary of 1 page.

Timeframe:

The work is expected to take 15 days. Indicative figures for the time each stage should take are noted above.

ANNEX 2

People Consulted

Priscilla Acquah, HR, HelpAge International
Talat Ahmed, HR and Diversity Manager, ActionAid UK
Edna Aquino, Violence Against Women Campaign Adviser, Amnesty International
Sylvia Beales, HelpAge International
Fiona Clark, HelpAge International
Fiona Gell, Policy Adviser, Gender Equity, Programme Policy Team, Oxfam GB
Jay Golden, Technical and Policy Unit, CARE International UK
Jane Esuantsiwa Goldsmith, Independent Development Consultant
Angela Hajepateras, HIV/Aids Advocacy and Research Team, ACORD, London
Angela Haynes, Minority Rights Group
Pat Holden, Senior Gender and Rights Advisor, Policy Division, DFID
Kamaljit Kerridge-Poonia, Diversity Advisor, DFID
Juliet Hunt, Consultant on Gender and Development, Australia*
Elisa Martinez, Senior Program Adviser, Gender Equity and Diversity, CARE USA*
Michael Posner, Marketing Adviser, VSO*
Sunitha Rangaswami, Consultant, India, formerly ActionAid UK Gender Policy Officer*
Helen Scadding, formerly Equalities officer with the GLA
Desta Solomon, ACORD, Nairobi
Eddie Thomas, Gender and Diversity Policy Adviser for Middle East, Eastern Europe and CIS Region, Oxfam GB

*designates e-mail correspondence rather than face-to-face or telephone interview

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