Evaluating Gender-Focused Initiatives in International Development: A Case Study of Afghanistan

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This project would not be possible without any of the aforementioned parties. I thank them all again for their time and willingness to assist with a project that has become the focal point of my undergraduate academic career.
List of Acronyms

- AKF  Aga Khan Foundation
- AREU  Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
- CARE  Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc.
- CEDAW  Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- CIDA  Canadian International Development Agency
- CRS  Catholic Relief Services
- ECOSOC  United Nations Economic and Social Council
- GAD  Gender and Development
- IARCSC  Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission
- IOM  International Organization for Migration
- ILO  International Labor Organization
- IQC  Indefinite Quality Contract
- MoWA  Ministry of Women’s Affairs (Afghanistan)
- NGO  Non-governmental organization
- OTI  Office for Transitional Initiatives
- RAWA  Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan
- SWIFT  Support Which Implements Fast Transition
- UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
- UNIFEM  United Nations Development Fund for Women
- USAID  United States Agency for International Development
- WID  Women in Development
In a rural province of Afghanistan, the construction of a water reservoir created problems for the village women. During the construction of the reservoir, women were treated like unpaid servants, cooking food for the workers with no compensation and no food for themselves. In addition to this maltreatment, the women faulted the placement of the reservoir because it was built close to a small stream that flooded during seasonal rain. When the spring rains came and women were alone in the village, they had to work together to move stones that would redirect the muddy floodwater away from the drinking water reservoir. Few besides the village women knew the role they played in protecting the reservoir, but their work connected them to the wider community and earned the wife of the man in charge of overseeing the reservoir a key to the reservoir’s door.¹

In Nicaragua, a local partner agency working on a coffee co-op project with an international development agency boasted a female accountant as a woman in an elevated position. She was the only woman in the office besides staff members of the international development agency visiting the site. Despite her relatively high position, she was always making the coffee. Male coworkers argued that she “makes it the best.”²

In another area of Nicaragua, a group of international and local development agencies implemented a project focused on maternal-child healthcare. The participants were overwhelmingly female so the agencies wanted to involve more men. The program was re-branded to send the message that men are responsible for the health of their wives, children, and other family members. Men began to attend sessions but did not participate. Now, health care volunteers go door to door checking on young children and, when sick, work with the entire family to sign a contract dictating how everyone will be involved in bringing the baby back to health. Staff commented that it should be called “holistic family health” rather than “maternal-infant health” in order to be more inclusive.³

In Guatemala, a water project within a Mayan community was designed to hold meetings during the time of the day when women were unable to attend. Access to the meetings was limited because of familial responsibilities: meetings were held when women traditionally would prepare the midday meal and women needed childcare or advance notice to arrange childcare to attend. As the meetings were not designed to fit into females’ schedules, they were intimidated because they did not think the project was for them.⁴

² Adapted from Wier, Betsy. Personal Interview. July 2006.
³ Adapted from Wier.
⁴ Adapted from Wier.
Introduction: Framing gender focused development

These brief anecdotes illustrate common frustrations with gender-focused development programs. Some of the most serious and recurring problems that emerge in gender-based development projects include but are not limited to:

- Lack of consultation during project development with women.
- Getting women into decision-making organizations but not allowing them to fully participate.
- Realizing the importance of family-focused development projects rather than solely those for males or females.
- Failure to understand cultural practices that may impede male or female participation in a project.

U.S. development programs after their overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 underscored the significance of female empowerment and thrust gender-focused development projects into the international spotlight. Despite widespread attention surrounding the plight of Afghan women emerging from Taliban rule, progress in gender development programs since the U.S. invasion has been slow. In order to examine in a comprehensive manner why progress has been difficult, I begin with an examination of the influence of development theory and institutional practices within gender-based development programs. From macro-level theories of gender and development and development institution relationships to micro-level Afghan agency experiences and the specific cultural case of female political participation, it is apparent that the international development goal of empowering women is difficult to realize.

\footnote{By “theory” I mean the definition of “gender” in the development context, the paradigms “Women in Development” and “Gender and Development,” the definition of “gender mainstreaming,” and the dichotomy of the “grassroots” as opposed to the “management and results” approaches to development work.}
I begin with an examination of development and aid world\(^6\) including relationships between government-based, for-profit, and non-profit development organizations. Complex and somewhat strained, these relationships demonstrate the institutional challenges in implementing a consistent, efficient development policy. Then I provide a concise review of the relevant theory in the area of gendered development work. I review the use of “gender” vs. “female,” followed by a condensed history of the rhetorical evolution of paradigms from “women in development” to “gender and development.” The theory section is highlighted by the emergence of “gender mainstreaming” and its effects on development projects in nearly every program area. Also, I consider theories of how to best use preexisting, local NGOs, and the advantages of grassroots or “management and results” approaches to development.

I chose Afghanistan as a case study because of the foreign policy emphasis by the U.S. on the importance of liberating women and its place in the ongoing ‘war on terrorism.’ What happens in Afghanistan is extremely relevant to U.S. foreign policy despite waning interest in continued military and financial investment.\(^7\) In a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, Barnett R. Rubin warns that waning U.S. interest in Afghanistan will not establish an environment conducive to future achievement of foreign policy objectives,

> “Only dramatic action can reverse the perception, common among both Afghans and their neighbors, that Afghanistan is not a high priority for the United States- and that the Taliban are winning as a result. Washington’s appeasement of Pakistan, diversion of resources to Iraq, and perpetual underinvestment in Afghanistan- which gets less aid per

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\(^6\) By “development world,” I refer to organizations whose mission is based in international development or humanitarian assistance, including government-based, for-profit, and not-for-profit agencies.

\(^7\) The average per capita level of aid distribution in several post conflict settings reveals a discrepancy between the needs of Afghanistan and other recent post conflict settings. In Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, an average of U.S.$250 per person, per year of aid was donated. In contrast, the international community has pledged U.S.$42 per person, per year of aid to Afghanistan over a period of five years. Statistics from CARE International, *Rebuilding Afghanistan: A Little Less Talk, a Lot More Action*. CARE International. 1 October 2002. Pg. 3. On the importance of investment in Afghanistan, a report cosponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Asia Society commented, “Losing the peace through inadequate support for the Karzai government would gravely erode U.S. credibility around the globe and make it far more difficult to obtain international support in dealing with similar crises in the future.”. “Afghanistan: Are We Losing the Peace?” June 2003.
capita than any other state with a recent postconflict rebuilding effort- have fueled that suspicion.”

In using Afghanistan as the featured case study, I examine relevant Afghan political and cultural history, ending in a detailed discussion of the U.S. invasion and reconstruction. An analysis of U.S. government agency, international NGO, and local NGO work follows in order to assess the discrepancy between the stated U.S. foreign policy and their successful implementation. The case study becomes more narrow with a focus on elections and female political participation projects. This section examines the challenges involved in assessing the impact of projects once they are designed and implemented.

I then analyze the critical issues emerging from the previous sections are then discussed, including the difficulties surrounding cultural understandings of “gender,” the frequent inability to allocate resources to live up to rhetorical policy goals, continued security concerns, lack of engagement with preexisting civil society organizations, and the influence of fading public support. I conclude with presenting lessons learned and policy prescriptions on the need to define “gender” and then appropriately face the challenges of living up to the public policy goals of empowering women.

The case study of female political participation project impact resulting from the 2005 parliamentary elections Afghanistan analyzed through the lenses of understanding development theory, development world relationships, and Afghanistan history, demonstrates that the

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9 I acknowledge that a fully comprehensive case study of gender-focused development programs in Afghanistan would require on-the-ground experience; however I have had extensive contact with NGO staff members who formerly or are currently working in several areas of Afghanistan. Included are: Melody McNeil and Sara Bowers from Catholic Relief Services-Herat; Sarah Chayes, founder of Arghand cooperative in Kandahar; and Lina Abirafeh, former Women for Women International staff member and UNIFEM consultant in Afghanistan. To accurately portray the intricacies of development institutional relationships and program development, I have spoken with Betsy Wier of Catholic Relief Services-Honduras; Hannie Meesters and Eirin Naess-Sorensen of the UNDP Gender Team; Jennifer Stewart, Director of the Middle East region for Chemonics; Karana Olivier of the National Endowment for Democracy; and Miriam Mansury of Women Waging Peace. More detailed biographies of each interviewee are included in an Appendix.
example of Afghanistan holds implications for future success in female-focused development projects. These lessons include, but are not limited to

- The importance of comprehensive cultural and political understanding before project development
- An awareness of the challenges faced in achieving rhetorically-pleasing policy initiatives
- More consistent institutional practices in the area of gender mainstreaming.

The research question this raises and which guides our inquiry is: How can gender-focused projects be best designed and implemented to achieve the greatest impact?
Chapter 1: Development world relationships: Building the institutional groundwork

Paradoxically, there is more possibility of donor impact if the current over-riding concern for results were reduced and greater effort put into the choice and quality of the relationships on which donors are dependent for their money and advice to make a difference. Enhancing the quality of relationships is as important as increasing the quantity of money. This means exploring whose voice counts in the relationship. If people inside aid organisations and in recipient countries and governments are not encouraged to speak frankly about what they know, donors cannot learn to be more effective.10

Within the development world, there are three major categories of institutions for creation and implementation of aid policies and funds: government-based, for-profit, and not-for-profit agencies. The complexity of the relationships between these three levels of institutions demonstrates structural challenges to implementing a consistent, efficient development policy, especially in the area of gender-focused development projects. Examples of each type of institution follow with commentary from several staff members from various development agencies on levels of collaboration. The review of development institutional relationships serves to enrich the later, more detailed case study of gender-focused development projects in Afghanistan.

Government-based development institutions, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), are the institutional arm of their nations’ foreign policy. CIDA is Canada’s lead agency for development assistance and has a mandate to “support sustainable development in developing countries in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable, and prosperous world.”11 CIDA is divided into five sectors directly related to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Before outlining the five sectors of governance, health, basic

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education, private sector development, and environmental sustainability, CIDA emphasizes the theme of gender equality within all sectors.\textsuperscript{12}

USAID’s purpose is to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives by supporting work in three program areas: economic growth, agriculture, and trade; global health; and democracy, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance.\textsuperscript{13} Within the three program areas, USAID provides assistance in technical assistance and capacity building, training and scholarships, food aid and disaster relief, infrastructure construction, small-enterprise loans, budget support, enterprise funds, and credit guarantees.\textsuperscript{14} USAID works in 100 developing countries in partnership with private voluntary organizations, indigenous groups, universities, American businesses, international organizations, other governments, trade and professional associations, faith-based organizations, and other U.S. government agencies.\textsuperscript{15} Through contracts and grant agreements, USAID has professional ties with more than 3,500 companies and over 300 U.S.-based private voluntary organizations.\textsuperscript{16} Noting the first difference between institutional mandates, there is no mention in the general outline of USAID project areas of an overarching focus on gender quality. This signifies a difference in institutional priorities that becomes significant when analyzing the successes and failures of gender-focused development programs in Afghanistan.

The complex working relationships between USAID and for-profit and the not-for-profit development agencies need to be detailed in order to fully comprehend the issues surrounding gender-focused development work in Afghanistan. Within USAID is the Office of Transition

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
Initiatives (OTI), whose mission is to support post-conflict countries during difficult periods of political change. USAID/OTI created the Support Which Implements Fast Transition II (SWIFT II) Indefinite Quality Contract (IQC) to react “quickly and effectively during times of turbulent political change.” IQC groups are construction groups that pre-compete for general USAID contracts, competing later for smaller projects. SWIFT II is a premier group of contractors that pledge to have a person on site within 72 hours of winning a contract to begin work on a project. This is seen more typically in post-conflict situations, before USAID arrives, somewhere “a little scary” where USAID is not yet present. SWIFT II contracts are managed from the Washington USAID/OTI office. According to USAID, the SWIFT II contracting mechanism allows USAID/OTI to “assemble teams and programs in the field quickly, help alleviate suffering, and contribute to peacebuilding efforts.” Among not-for-profit development organizations, these contractors are known as the “Beltway Bandits,” and they are viewed as going into development projects with little preparation and being paid more than necessary. This tension between for-profit and not-for-profit agencies creates a difficult environment for collaboration at the earliest stages of project development.

For-profit development agencies, such as Chemonics, are a part of the SWIFT II IQC companies for USAID. While the relationship between contractors such as Chemonics and government-based development organizations such as USAID are working, there is a defined rift

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19 Ibid.
20 “What is a SWIFT IQC?”
21 Olivier, Karana. Personal Interview. October 2006. Thomas Dichter explains the ‘Beltway Bandit’ concept in “Foreign Aid Policy: Old Wine in a New Bottle?” In Foreign Service Journal June 2006, “‘Beltway bandits’ [are] the for-profit firms whose business is delivering USAID’s packages (DAI, Chemonics, Nathan, Checchi, Abt, and so on). The business-as-usual theme shows up especially in contract durations. They remain, by and large, just one to five years (and no more than seven), ignoring the deepest lesson of all: development takes time, and usually open-ended time.” Pg. 32.
between contractors and not for-profit organizations because of a “misconception that contractors want a lot of money.”

Jennifer Stewart of Chemonics argued, after working for both the non-profit and for-profit sides of development, that NGOs do not make any less than contractors do. She stated, “A NGO’s profits just go back into their organization which does not mean that they are using the money for anything better.”

Despite Stewart’s comment, the size of the profit margin is different and often, the contracts are bigger. Stewart cited differing mission statements: while some are grassroots oriented, for example CARE, others are focused on management and results, such as Chemonics. Stewart said that there are people who have not worked on both sides that like to demonize the other.

Stewart sees the merit in both types of development work, “There is a need for both for-profit and not-for-profit in the development world” because of the balance of the grassroots and management-focused missions.

Not-for-profit development organizations exist on the international and national level. On an international level, the United Nations Development Programme works with national governments and employs mostly national staff. The UNDP has a mandate to work with local civil society organizations and “only the framework is top down because there is a focus on empowering the local level.” Relationships within the UN structure are difficult to navigate. While the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is technically a part of UNDP, the relationship is strained. Staff within both agencies have been trying to remedy this, but UNIFEM is intrinsically at a disadvantage because it does not have the same amount of

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22 Stewart.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
money, resources, and country presence as UNDP. When UNIFEM does not have an office in a country or area, the UNDP office is meant to be the UNIFEM presence. According to two members of the UNDP Gender Team, this is not always executed properly.

Another example of an international NGO with a more specific program focus is Women for Women International. As the only organization operating in the center of conflicts that is exclusively dedicated to serving women’s development needs, Women for Women International seeks both immediate relief and long-term skills development. Women for Women International’s objective is to bridge the “critical gap between humanitarian aid and long-term development and reconstruction.” Believing that women are participants rather than victims, the organization argues that “engaging women is the most effective avenue toward creating lasting change and stability within a society,” asserting that, “Stronger women build stronger nations.” In the summer of 2002, Lina Abirafeh arrived in Afghanistan to lead the Women for Women International office in Kabul. Abirafeh’s purpose, as the only non-Afghan staff member at Women for Women International, was to work herself out of a job. This demanded the development of a sustainable civil society agency. Abirafeh’s office brought women from the street into the office for vocational training. During a presentation by Abirafeh in October 2006, development agency experts commented on the excellence of Women for Women’s model, as there is no rigid cycle, finds ways to adapt to women’s needs, and it works to support the whole family.

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29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
On the national level, not-for-profit organizations tend to be more specialized, with fewer monetary and personnel resources. Examples of national NGOs in Afghanistan include: the Revolutionary Association of Women for Afghanistan (RAWA) and the Shuhada Organization. RAWA, the oldest political/social organization of women in Afghanistan, was established in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1977 as an independent political/social organization of Afghan women fighting for human rights and social justice. Founded under the leadership of Meena, RAWA’s objective was and continues to be to involve an increasing number of Afghan women in social and political activities. RAWA is involved in activities in socio-political areas such as education, health, income generation, and political agitation. The Shuhada Organization is currently the largest Afghan women-led NGO, with roots in Pakistan in 1989. The Shuhada Organization now has offices in Kabul and clinics in four provinces and Kabul. The organization works on female health and education initiatives and serves at-risk women in Afghanistan and the refugee communities in Pakistan.

Cooperation between the many levels of development agencies is complex and somewhat strained because of competing agendas, different institutional structures, and varying levels of financial and political influence of each agency. Working for Women for Women International and later as a consultant for UNIFEM, Abirafeh did not see much cooperation between USAID, international NGOs, and local NGOs, finding that organizations like USAID prefer to “work only with their ‘usual suspects’ – organizations [that] they have worked with extensively in the past in other countries.” She did not sense an interest in collaboration with local organizations, nor an interest in a nuanced understanding of women in Afghanistan. Catholic Relief Services staff members Sara Bowers and Melody McNeil see the relationship between USAID and

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36 Ibid.
international and local NGOs differently, however. They observe cooperation, yet project participation is often limited because of security concerns, “USAID staff are very restricted as to travel and often aren't able to visit remote project locations.”

Further articulating challenges in development institution relationships, former NPR reporter and founder of Arghand, a cooperative in Kandahar, Afghanistan Sarah Chayes stated that her problem with major donors such as USAID/OTI is that they are not proactive enough, citing the “absolutely ludicrous procurement requirements” necessary to write a proposal they can accept. She did not experienced adequate levels of interaction between major donors and likely grant recipients, whether helping with writing or developing the projects. Chayes additionally noted that a lack of mobility and continuity of personnel impedes these relationships. Overall, the intricacies of development institution relationships demonstrate the institutional challenges in implementing a consistent, efficient development policy. The increased emphasis placed on the integration of gender in development programs further complicates these policies.

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
Chapter 2: Understanding the theory of gender-focused development

We need to liken the need for gender equality expertise to the need for technical expertise in information technology. Twenty years ago a department might have had one computer for 20 people. When someone needed to use a computer, they would get up from their desk, go to the computer and do whatever task was necessary. At that time, there was typically only one technical person for the whole organization who could attend to any computer glitches. Now, in contrast, there is a computer on every desk; that is, computers have been mainstreamed. As everyone uses them, the need for technical support has increased rather than fallen. Also, as the technology and uses have become more sophisticated, we now need technical departments with different types of expertise. Lastly, because information technologies are changing all the time and are such an integral part of our work, successful and efficient organizations are doing long-range, strategic thinking about the path technology will take and what kinds of skills and policies they will need.41

Gender as a concern and categorical reality within international development agencies has transformed both in terminology and in practice. The vocabulary of gender-focused development has evolved from “women in development” to “gender and development,” an indicator of a more gender and culturally inclusive approach. Combining changes in terminology and practice, “gender mainstreaming” is now the goal of many international organizations. Gender mainstreaming means the inclusion of gender in all project areas, rather than stand alone as its own area. While both changes are positive, integrating gender into many institutions’ everyday activities poses significant challenges. In this section I provide a brief review of the two terminology changes and then I examine how gender-focused development is being integrated into government-based agencies and international NGOs. Generally, I find that many development organizations are progressing towards consistent, institution-wide understanding of the importance of integrating gender into all projects. However, progress has not yet been seen regularly in project design, implementation and assessment.

From WID to GAD: The Evolution of Women in Development to Gender and Development

Not all groups are pleased with the change from ‘women’ to ‘gender’. An account of debates about gender as the Fourth Women’s Conference in Beijing reported that some Third World women felt that GAD emphasized ‘processes rather than results’ and that gender was being used ‘to deny the very existence of women-specific disadvantage.’

The evolution of the “Women in Development” (WID) approach to the “Gender and Development” (GAD) approach as a means to describe appropriate gender-focused development work marks a change in institutional attitude and labeling. In their time, the introductions of both WID and GAD were revolutionary in their time. In the 1970s, the WID model “challenged the male bias in foreign assistance,” while in the late 1980s, the GAD approach “put women and development in the context of gender power relations.” In theory, WID and GAD are making different assertions. Within the WID approach, women are highlighted as the “other” half of a community’s population that needed to be approached and engaged for the first time. The GAD approach strategically uses “gender.” No longer are only women emphasized because, in the GAD approach, all genders must participate in the struggle for equal opportunity. While each promise empowerment to women, WID and GAD approaches reveal a frustrating level of institutional misunderstanding on the level of project design, implementation, and assessment when working within gender-focused programming. In light of its importance, I will review the creation and decline of “women in development,” followed by the emergence of “gender and development” as the solution. Then I will review the implications for successful gender-focused programs and the challenges that remain.

After the 1975 conference in Mexico City, which began of the UN Decade for Women, many governments and international development organizations adopted “women in

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43 Jaquette and Staudt. Pg. 18.
development” as a goal.\textsuperscript{44} Lucille Mair, secretary-general of the Mid-Decade conference in 1980, noted that this emerged from the discovery that women were the “missing link in development…half a nation’s resources that could no longer be wasted.”\textsuperscript{45} Thus, attention needed to be shifted in development programs to address the unique needs of women. Rooted in the belief that “development processes would proceed much better if women were fully incorporated into them (instead of being left to use their time ‘unproductively’),” WID focused “mainly on women in isolation, promoting measures such as access to credit and employment as the means by which women can be better integrated into the development process.”\textsuperscript{46}

The emergence of the WID approach affected the U.S. development agenda. In 1973, the U.S. Congress passed the Percy Amendment\textsuperscript{47}, an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act that called for the establishment of an Office of Women in Development within USAID, required “U.S. bilateral assistance programs to enhance the integration of women into the national economies of developing countries,” and instructed the State Department to “consider progress on women’s issues when making decisions about funding international organizations.”\textsuperscript{48} Despite its best intentions in retrospect, the Percy amendment lacked specific direction on how the mandate should be implemented.\textsuperscript{49} While many staff members at USAID agreed to do “something” about women, there were several staff members who resisted by ridiculing WID advocates as “women’s libbers” and calling WID a “culturally inappropriate” policy that was going to damage USAID’s credibility.\textsuperscript{50} This lack of direction translated into inconsistent

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{44} Ibid. Pg. 23.
\bibitem{46} Moser, Caroline O.N. \textit{Gender planning and development}. London: Routledge, 1993. Pg. 3.
\bibitem{47} Named after the Senator that sponsored the bill, Senator Charles Percy (R-IL).
\bibitem{49} Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 24.
\bibitem{50} Ibid. Pg. 24.
\end{thebibliography}
success within the Office of Women in Development. By 1980, the WID Office had made some progress, but by the mid-1980s, the WID approach began to draw serious criticism. WID was viewed “as a Band-aid treating the symptom (women’s poverty) but not the illness (capitalist development).” To further the argument for focusing on structure rather than symptom, some practitioners and scholars argued that WID disregarded social and political structures within which women were located and acted because of its emphasis on access. Another critique was that WID treated women like clients, removing any sense of authentic female participation in public life. Finally, WID in practice targeted women as a social group as a means through which prioritized development goals could be realized, regardless of whether it was in the direct interest of women. From these critiques, WID earned the “welfarist” model of gender-focused development label.

Frustrations with the beliefs and practices within the WID approach led to the emergence of the “Gender and development” model in the late 1980s. Jaquette and Staudt reflect on the change,

“Arguing that WID had been ineffective in improving women’s material conditions and that it was insensitive to the differences among women, GAD advocates suggested an innovative approach that would take account of women’s diversity and confront the gender power relations that were holding women back.”

In addition to taking women’s diversity and gender power relations into account, there was a movement to examine “gender” rather than “women” in order to move from perceiving women based on their “sex” to their “gender.” This allowed analysis of the systematic subordination of

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52 Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 25.
53 Ibid. Pg. 25.
55 Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 25.
57 Ibid. Pg. 28.
women in the social relationship between men and women.\textsuperscript{58} This emphasis on social construction over biological definitions allowed for cultural variance. GAD was viewed as able to transform to fit various cultures, as many believed “GAD would be able to respond to the differences among women rather than seeing them as a homogenous group” because it focused on social relationships.\textsuperscript{59}

Carolyn Moser’s development of the conceptual rationale for gender planning in her work “Gender Planning in the Third World” from the late 1980s is one of the foundations of the GAD approach.\textsuperscript{60} In the document, Moser argued that the “ubiquitous WID approach has mystified rather than clarified conceptual categories and served to legitimize a diversity of approaches to women, which incorporate different underlying assumptions in relation to women’s practical and strategic gender needs.”\textsuperscript{61} Because of these confusions, Moser argued that it was “important to develop simple but rigorous tools to enable policy-makers and planners to understand with greater clarity the implications of their interventions, in terms of both their potential and their limitations in assisting Third World women.”\textsuperscript{62} Through a review of the “welfare,” “efficiency,” “equity,” “anti-poverty,” and “empowerment” approaches to gender-focused development, Moser critiqued the late 1980s development institutional environment. She called for a shift away from the welfare and efficiency approaches to the anti-poverty, equity, and empowerment approaches.

\textsuperscript{58} Moser. *Gender planning and development.* Pg. 3. Scholars influential in this movement were Oakley (1972) and Rubin (1975).
\textsuperscript{59} Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 28.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. Pg. 28.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid. Pg. 111.
GAD considered WID’s focus on women in isolation as ignoring the real problem, which GAD identified as women’s continuing subordinate status to men.\(^{63}\) By arguing that women cannot be viewed in isolation, the GAD approach underscored a focus on gender relations when creating female empowerment-based initiatives.\(^{64}\) The focus shifted from exclusively women to the concepts of socially constructed gender relations with an emphasis on the systematic subordination of women.\(^{65}\) By shifting from a focus on women’s lack of resources to the gender roles that fostered this lack of access to resources, GAD advocates “attempted to demonstrate the concrete materiality of gender subordination as it is constructed by the rules and practices of different institutions: household, market, state and community.”\(^{66}\) The GAD approach intended to challenge gender roles by training women in “male” skills, changing zoning regulations to allow household enterprises, ensuring women’s ownership rights to land and housing, and providing child care and transport facilities suited to the demands made on women.\(^{67}\) The goal of GAD was a marked shift in gender-focused development because it called for full participation from both men and women in the decision making process, its ultimate goal being equitable development.\(^{68}\) Jaquette and Staudt explain,

“GAD’s emphasis on ‘bringing men back in’ provided not only a bureaucratic strategy but a new analytical focus. Instead of talking just about women as a uniform category, GAD emphasized the differences among women and drew attention to gender conflict. As issues of violence against women became more salient for women’s movements worldwide, for example, GAD advocates pointed out that improving women’s access to resources in an environment where men are losing jobs and status creates male resentment and, in some cases, violence. Some projects tried to address this by increasing women’s and men’s productivity in tandem.”\(^{69}\)

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\(^{63}\) Moser. *Gender planning and development.* Pg. 3.
\(^{64}\) Ibid. Pg. 3.
\(^{65}\) Rai. Pg. 72.
\(^{66}\) Razavi and Miller. Pg. 12-13.
\(^{67}\) Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 29.
\(^{68}\) Rai. Pg. 72.
\(^{69}\) Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 32.
Working to increase men’s and women’s productivity in tandem, development initiatives under the GAD approach, ideally, identified and addressed the practical needs of both men and women while keeping the overall strategic interests of women in mind.\textsuperscript{70}

The GAD approach addressed WID’s shortcomings and built on its successes by taking a more structural approach, taking gender and global inequalities into account.\textsuperscript{71} The evolution consisted of not only a shift from a focus on women-specific projects to mainstreaming women/gender at every program and policy level; but also “from a reliance on top-down planning to a growing emphasis on ‘bottom-up’ or ‘participatory’ development strategies signifying the growing politicization of the development agenda.”\textsuperscript{72} Mainstreaming,\textsuperscript{73} the essential element of GAD, “could be tried because WID had been the entering wedge into bureaucratic discourses and practices.”\textsuperscript{74} WID theorists allowed for development institutions and governments to realize the important correlation between work and status, specifically giving “primacy to women’s productive roles and integration into the economy as a means of improving their status…[as] a part of a strategy aimed at reformulating women’s identity for development policy.”\textsuperscript{75} This laid the groundwork for GAD and mainstreaming. Yet mainstreaming also had to rely on previously “WID”-labeled practices:

“Mainstreaming might dismiss women-specific projects as too narrowly conceived but, in the end, GAD needed women-only programs for the same reasons WID did: because women often could not attend meetings where men were present, because women have different work schedules from men, or because women’s leadership is more readily nurtured in women-specific projects than in mixed groups.”\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{70} Rai. Pg. 72.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. Pg. 72.
\textsuperscript{72} Razavi and Miller. Pg. 7.
\textsuperscript{73} Mainstreaming will be discussed in further detail later in this section.
\textsuperscript{74} Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 31.
\textsuperscript{75} Razavi and Miller. Pg. 9.
\textsuperscript{76} Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 31.
Thus, the emergence of GAD and its call for gender mainstreaming was not an indication of the end of the need for female-only programming. As I will argue in a later section, the case of Afghanistan necessitates a level of gender separation within projects. Yet, the importance of all genders working for equal opportunity should not be lost in the need for female-specific programs. There are opportunities for a family-based or, at the minimum, a more gender-inclusive approach to gender equality.

GAD was not vastly different from WID in practice because it still needed some women-only elements; therefore the question remains as to why GAD supporters insisted it was different. Jaquette and Staudt explain its origins in organizational bureaucracy, “By portraying GAD as a new, coherent alternative that could correct the defects of WID, GAD supporters could gain traction in bureaucracies suffering from ‘WID fatigue.’” To illustrate this, they note that negative assessments such as “too-women-specific” and “welfarist” of WID became “common” in development literature. “Welfare” came to signify “all that was wanting in early development practice vis-à-vis women.” It encompassed many overlapping issues:

“First, an undue emphasis on women’s reproductive roles (and the neglect of their productive work); second, a view of women as passive beneficiaries (as opposed to active agents); and most importantly, the relegation of women’s issues to marginalized and under-funded projects (rather than their incorporation into mainstream development programmes and policies).”

While this bureaucratic shift might have been necessary to revive energy to work on gender issues within development institutions, Rai notes that GAD remains a potentially powerful concept that has not yet been fully realized because of labeling confusion with WID, the dangers

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77 Ibid. Pg 31-32.
78 Ibid. Pg. 29.
79 Razavi and Miller. Pg. 39.
80 Ibid. Pg. 39.
of co-option, and the need to address the different socio-economic spaces occupied by women in addition to gendered power relations.\textsuperscript{81}

Yet these critiques were not completely well-founded. WID, like GAD, made women’s economic empowerment a priority. Additionally, WID advocates were confronted with some development professionals who argued that WID was no longer necessary when women were already reached by existing health, education, and population programs.\textsuperscript{82} Women still needed to be targeted as program participants more so than men, even within the GAD belief that men should be involved.

Challenges in practice were not solved with the introduction of GAD. There remained a need for women-specific programs. Muneera Salem-Murdock of USAID commented,

“The reason—and this really comes from experience—that we keep focusing on women is because experience has really taught us that if you do not focus, if you do not underline, if you do not specify, then more frequently than not they tend not to be considered at all. And you cannot do development without half the society … When we need to focus on men in GAD, I would welcome that time, because that means not only have women achieved equality, but they have surpassed it.”\textsuperscript{83}

Thus, the inclusion of men into the gender-focused development project agenda posed a threat to the persistent need to specifically address women’s needs. The challenge remains today for how to develop a family-focused or gender equality-based approach that empowers men and women simultaneously.

From an institutional approach, this evolution greatly affected USAID, which thrived under the precepts of the WID approach, but struggled with the evolution to GAD. In the 1970s, USAID and its WID office “consciously” tried to be uncontroversial, offering programs focused

\textsuperscript{81} Rai. Pg. 73.
\textsuperscript{82} Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 29.
\textsuperscript{83} Interview taken from \textit{Mainstreaming Men into Gender and Development: Debates, Reflections, and Experiences} by Sylvia Chant and Matthew Gutmann. Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2000. Pg. 44.
on economic benefits for women without cultural backlash.\textsuperscript{84} The WID Office would not fund projects that “emphasized ‘consciousness-raising’ in order to avoid the charge that it was promoting Western-style feminism.”\textsuperscript{85} With the change to GAD and the more culturally-focused work within social gender structures, a “now cautious” USAID/WID left space for non-U.S. donors to move in and allowed these donors and the project recipients to distance themselves from USAID.\textsuperscript{86}

To remedy the shortcomings coming from the legacy of WID and the current application of GAD, there are several changes in institutional practice that can occur. First, Jaquette and Staudt encourage a more political slant: “GAD advocates should expand their interest in cultural construction to include politics, and draw attention to the many patterns of state and civil society interaction that exist in the world today.”\textsuperscript{87} Rai argues for a focus on economics in addition to political and social foci, noting the importance of addressing the relations of production and accumulation as well as patriarchal relations.\textsuperscript{88} The emerging GAD fatigue and “overreach” from the U.S. establishes a potential environment for rethinking development programming and macroeconomic policies.\textsuperscript{89}

“The history of WID and GAD suggests that clear and well-articulated models can make a difference in donor policies. It is time to refocus attention on women and on development and to reconnect analysis and practice. This effort will require cooperation between North and South and among scholars, advocates, and practitioners. It will depend on the active involvement of women themselves as agents of change and protectors of the traditions they value. It will need to recognize that although radicalism can inspire reform; neither capitalism nor patriarchy is going to be swept away by revolutionary fiat. We have to begin where we are.”\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{84} Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 30.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid. Pg. 30.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid. Pg 31-32.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid. Pg. 43.
\textsuperscript{88} Rai. Pg. 73.
\textsuperscript{89} Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 49.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid. Pg. 49-50.
To begin where we are requires that we know where we have been. Fortunately, the evolution of gender-focused development institutional framework can be described in simple terms. The WID approach is often categorized as “welfarist,” and GAD as the “anti-poverty,” “equity,” or “efficiency” approach. Emerging from women’s organizations in developing nations is the “empowerment” approach, “focusing not on women as a strictly economic target but rather as a force for transforming social relations.” The history of institutional approaches to framing gender-focused development proves that this field is continually evolving to best promote gender equality.

**Gender Mainstreaming**

*There is a need to promote gender analysis, primarily because gender concerns are fundamental in defining social concerns, but also because the experience of mainstreaming gender in development policies may provide an example of ways to mainstream social concerns.*

Gender mainstreaming has become a widely-employed concept across international development agencies as the answer for integrating gender into projects. As a rebuttal to gender as a separate and distinct project area, gender mainstreaming aims to include an understanding of impacts placed upon both women and men in all areas and on all levels of project design, implementation, and evaluation with the ultimate intention of gender equality. Considered as resulting from “Women in Development,” which added women, to “Gender and Development,” which means men too, Abirafeh notes that this point of male inclusion is often forgotten.

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Gender mainstreaming emerged from the GAD development institutional framework as the primary tool for addressing gendered power relations. Mainstreaming posed a challenge to patriarchy through the argument that women’s perspective, difference, capacity, and knowledge needed to become a part of the mainstream development agenda and respective national agendas to affect change. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) produced a now frequently cited definition,

“Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.”

Yet the ECOSOC definition is not the only specification of gender mainstreaming. Other definitions also focus on public administration, but some focus on specific tools such as gender analysis or the incorporation of gender issues in all program or government areas. Gender mainstreaming can also be defined as institutional dedication to outwardly visible support for women rather than working under the assumption that gender-neutral development programs will equally benefit women and men. Regardless of different institutional definitions, the main objective of gender mainstreaming, gender equality across development programs and governments remains.

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97 ECOSOC. July 1997.
98 Prugl and Lustgarten. Pg. 56.
Gender mainstreaming emerged at a time when GAD advocates were criticizing women-only programs as simply aiming for equal participation numbers and not attacking structurally embedded gender oppression. To address this, they suggested looking at the power relationship between women and men. This required major organizational change, including changes in institutional cultures, goals, structures, and resource allocations. Soon gender mainstreaming emerged as the primary instrument for implementing gender equality for development institutions.

In 1995, the UN’s Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This document provided the original call for gender mainstreaming in the UN system. It mandated “mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes” in several areas.

Because GAD maintains that gender inequality is structurally embedded, mainstreaming focuses on reforming institutions, requiring changes in agenda setting, policy making, project design, implementation, and evaluation. As Prugl and Lustgarten explain,

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100 Prugl and Lustgarten. Pg. 55.
101 Ibid. Pg. 55.
103 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, Beijing, 15 September 1995. This included calls for a mainstreamed gender perspective in addressing: “unequal access to and inadequate educational opportunities” (81); “inequalities in health status and unequal access to and inadequate health-care services between women and men” (106); the establishment of “ministerial and interministerial mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of women’s health policy and programme reforms and...high-level focal points in national planning authorities responsible for monitoring to ensure that women’s health concerns are mainstreamed in all relevant government agencies and programmes (111); “violence against women” (124); “armed or other conflicts” (143); “economic potential and independence of women” (166); “inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels” (191); the use of “methodologies for conducting gender-based analysis in policies and programmes and for dealing with the differential effects of policies on women and men [that] have been developed in many organizations and are available for application but are often not being applied or are not being applied consistently (202); “enjoyment of human rights” (229); “the issue of the mobilization of the media” (238); “the lack of adequate recognition and support for women's contribution to conservation and management of natural resources and safeguarding the environment” (252).
104 Kardam. Also in Prugl and Lustgarten. Pg. 69.
“Mainstreaming enables systematic attention to the differential impacts of policies and programs on women and men in organizational processes and outcomes and in this way addresses the structural embeddedness of gender inequality. At the same time, the experience reviewed [by the authors] confirms that processes of co-optation are taking place and supports critics who have long warned of this danger associated with mainstreaming. It cautions feminists not to see gender mainstreaming as the be-all and end-all but to complement institutional with movement strategies.”¹⁰⁵

They rightfully caution that the focus on women’s empowerment can potentially be lost in the mainstreaming process. Mainstreaming can threaten organizations who have women’s empowerment as their main goal because it aims to eliminate the separation of women’s issues.¹⁰⁶ In one example, the Dutch government cut off funding to UNIFEM because it was employing mainstreaming.¹⁰⁷ This is not the intention of mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming still needs gender-dedicated focal points within organizations to train, monitor, and apply research findings.¹⁰⁸ These gender issue advocates will only be successful when it is widely agreed that the goals of economic growth, human rights, and sustainable development are only achieved with a fundamental focus on gender.¹⁰⁹

Gender mainstreaming comes with extreme cultural variance. Understanding political and institutional contexts is essential to successful gender mainstreaming. Initially, defining the ‘gender perspective’ and “the concerns and experiences of women and men” is essential.¹¹⁰ But during project life, mainstreaming requires different implementation styles, resources, and

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¹⁰⁵ Prugl and Lustgarten. Pg. 69-70.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid. Pg. 59.
¹⁰⁷ Jaquette and Staudt, Pg. 41.
¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Pg. 41.
¹⁰⁹ Kardam. Kardam uses examples of successful mainstreaming into operational practices of development institutions and governments: Ministries of Planning and Finance in the Philippines, Turkey, Zambia and Namibia, the DGIS donor agency in the Netherlands, and the NGOs BRAC and ACORD.
¹¹⁰ Prugl and Lustgarten. Pg. 56.
indicators for evaluation.\textsuperscript{111} New staff, different budgeting practices, policy procedures, training programs, and project design guidelines are necessary at an institutional and community level.\textsuperscript{112}

Institutionally, these definitional changes were significant. Formally endorsing mainstreaming as its primary method of achieving gender equality, UNDP’s structure, relationship with UNIFEM, and program creation, implementation, and assessment have been affected.\textsuperscript{113} From 1975 to 1987, UNDP only addressed WID/GAD and mainstreaming in its annual reports in the years when UN Women’s Conferences were held (1975, 1980, 1985).\textsuperscript{114} By 1989, two years after the creation of the WID division of UNDP, the annual report acknowledged gender issues as a theme of human development.\textsuperscript{115} The Gender in Development Program (GIDP) in UNDP was created in 1992. “Gender focal points” were established in each of UNDP’s 134 country offices.\textsuperscript{116} These consist of a program staff person and a member of senior management, designated together as a “focal point” to oversee the implementation of gender mainstreaming.\textsuperscript{117} At the international level, the Gender Programme Team facilitates the global knowledge network made of the focal points, UN volunteers, and UNIFEM regional program directors to offer guidance on policies and programs and how to promote gender equality throughout UNDP.\textsuperscript{118}

\textit{Relationship between UNDP and UNIFEM: Dependency or collaboration?}

In addition to the collaboration on the global knowledge network level, UNDP is increasingly working with UNIFEM to address the challenges of gender-focused development.

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{111} Ibid. Pg. 56.
\item\textsuperscript{112} Kardam.
\item\textsuperscript{113} Prugl and Lustgarten. Pg. 57.
\item\textsuperscript{115} Jahan. Pg. 93-94.
\item\textsuperscript{116} Prugl and Lustgarten. Pg. 57.
\item\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. Pg. 57.
\item\textsuperscript{118} Ibid. Pg. 57.
\end{itemize}
In 2004, the UNDP and UN Population Fund (UNPF) issued a report mandating coordination at the program level, joining UNIFEM regional programs and UNDP regional centers to become the “regional hubs for expanded knowledge and action on gender equality.” Also, in-depth, joint analysis by UNDP and UNIFEM was cited in three existing areas: governance, HIV/AIDS, and crisis prevention and recovery, with a call to expand these analyses to other areas. Finally, the report required “unity of leadership on the gender issue between UNDP and UNIFEM.”

Yet an evaluation of this partnership revealed problems with the relationship in practice. Problems in institutional theory arose when determining UNIFEM’s place within the mainstreaming agenda. As mainstreaming aims to promote female empowerment and gender equality without separating gender-focused initiatives, UNIFEM’s women-only mandate appeared problematic. The evaluation of the relationship revealed that, at one time, UNDP leadership argued that gender mainstreaming elements were “expendable” if already addressed by UNIFEM. This action discouraged UNDP staff from pursuing mainstreaming, undermined the Gender Unit, and perpetuated a perception that UNIFEM could cover gender mainstreaming for UNDP. Yet UNDP has its own mandate and is therefore responsible for purposefully taking account of gender differences and promoting gender equality.

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120 Ibid. Pg. 9.
121 Ibid. Pg. 9.
123 Ibid. Pg. viii.
124 Ibid. Pg. viii.
This deference to UNIFEM can be partially accredited to a lack of resources to implement gender mainstreaming in all UNDP activities, although I also argue that some UNDP leadership and staff members did not internalize or operationalize the new mandate to make gender mainstreaming successful within the UNDP structure. Though most country offices reported “effective or very effective” cooperation between the two organizations in an evaluation by the UNDP Evaluation Office, the evaluation team found these outcomes to be highly dependent on staff personalities.

Continued Challenges: The institutional and program levels

Gender mainstreaming within UNDP is an example of the continued challenges inherent in successful gender-focused development. An evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP from 2006 articulated these challenges that are applicable to many development institutions. Structurally, UNDP further complicated the application of gender mainstreaming by frequently changing the gender-focused department overseeing the process. In 2000, the Gender Unit (now the Gender Team) advised the Bureau of Development Policy (BDP), then in 2002, UNDP put gender within the poverty practice area. As of 2006, the Gender Unit reported directly to the BDP Director, the six UNDP regional gender advisors had little authority or control over follow-up, and gender focal points had no clear job description, were junior-level, and often had other tasks.

In addition to macro-level staff problems, general UNDP staff training needs improvement. Cited in an evaluation as “one of the most disappointing aspects of UNDP’s

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125 The deference to UNIFEM can also be attributed to lack of headquarters-level support in allocating resources, (not rhetoric, as gender mainstreaming is officially adopted by UNDP.)
126 UNDP Evaluation Office. Pg. viii.
127 Meesters.
128 UNDP Evaluation Office. Pg. vi.
129 Ibid. Pg. vi.
gender mainstreaming,” is the minimal attempts to foster gender understanding among the staff.130 “UNDP offers no centralized training, though there has been some quite effective training at the regional and country level. Many countries now have national gender experts, but they are often overlooked and under-utilized.”131 A practice note on gender equality from UNDP asserted that “all staff are responsible for gender results.”132 This is difficult to obtain without incentive. Vandemoortele, Zaoude, and Silovic suggest tying gender work to results and competency assessments (RCA). With this requirement, staff can work with supervisors to reprioritize workloads in order to accommodate for time to work on gender mainstreaming within their program area.”133 Gender mainstreaming does not need to be complex or arduous; rather the proper amount of personnel resources need to be allocated in order make it truly “everyone’s responsibility, everyone’s job.”134

Gender mainstreaming requires more than personnel policy application. In particular, it needs to be applied to the development project process. In the project planning and design stage, gender mainstreaming means “being explicit about the differing needs and experiences of men and women, making space for all stakeholders, giving voice and visibility to women’s as well as men’s perspectives, and ensuring that the design is informed by gender-disaggregated data.”135 This requires listening to both men and women about what they personally consider as the most important issues and identifying the stakeholders in gendered power relations.136 In the next stage, implementation, gender mainstreaming means assuring that implementing partners have

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130 Ibid. Pg. vi.
131 Ibid. Pg. vi.
132 Vandemoortele and Silovic. Pg. 20.
133 Ibid. Pg. 20.
134 Ibid. Pg. 20.
135 Ibid. Pg. 9.
received adequate amounts of gender training\textsuperscript{137} and that the project will foster equal participation between women and men in decision-making processes and equal levels of respect.\textsuperscript{138}

In the monitoring stage, a gender mainstreamed approach entails following indicators that accurately measure the impact of the project by each gender group.\textsuperscript{139} Those monitoring the project should have opportunities to strengthen their skills in gender-focused work through educational opportunities and safe spaces for candid dialogue on gender issues.\textsuperscript{140} The impact of mainstreaming can also be assessed through an assessment of the strength of the women’s movement in a particular area, levels of participation in public action, and amount of involvement in national and local decision making bodies.\textsuperscript{141} In a final evaluation, gender mainstreaming requires a gender balanced, gender sensitive evaluation team, male and female participation in determining evaluation criteria, and explicit assessment of gender equality.\textsuperscript{142}

To improve gender mainstreaming within the UNDP structure, the evaluation team identified ten ways to improve. Recommendations included: leadership dedication, accountability and incentives, retaining programmatic strategy, strengthening institutional framework, improving gender expertise on the country office level, improving the capacity of all staff, allocating sufficient resources, clarify the relationship with UNIFEM, improve advocacy and partnerships, and promotion of accountability by the Executive Board.\textsuperscript{143} These recommendations are applicable to other agencies because the call for leadership, staff, and

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid. Pg. 22.
\textsuperscript{138} Vandemoortele, and Silovic. Pg. 9.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid. Pg. 9.
\textsuperscript{140} Neimanis. Pg. 22.
\textsuperscript{141} Jahan. Pg. 14.
\textsuperscript{142} Vandemoortele, and Silovic. Pg. 9.
\textsuperscript{143} UNDP Evaluation Office. Pg. x-xi.
program accountability in addition to better institutional structure. These suggestions will become relevant in the later discussion of gender-focused programs in Afghanistan.

Gender mainstreaming has the potential to disintegrate into merely a repetitive activity. An institutional cycle of varying levels of interest and dedication to mainstreaming is typical because of dependence on personalities. Typically, organizational commitment comes from senior level staff who establish a small team to begin implementation with little structure. Those in charge of the implementation have to add this work to their regular load, are usually all women, and paid less than consultants who work in other fields. Once organizational priorities shift, commitment to gender issues is reduced and the implementing team is criticized as too weak to oppose the waning dedication to mainstreaming. The team is small and no structure mandating mainstreaming has been established; therefore it is easy for gender mainstreaming and/or a broader focus on gender issues to under-perform or be lost in the organization’s priorities. As is evident from this general account of an institution’s cycle of interest in gender mainstreaming and the extensive UNDP example, there are many institutional challenges involved in gender mainstreaming. These are revealed best by the personal experiences of gender mainstreaming from staff at UNDP, CRS, Women for Women International, and Afghans for Civil Society.

**Gender Mainstreaming in the Institutional Experience**

“Mainstreaming gender could ultimately do away with the previous gender/women office because it is clear that one office cannot serve as ‘watchdog’ for a whole organization. There needs to be a doing away with a tick-box mentality...Ideally, gender concerns would be automatically included and there will be no further need for a ‘gender office.’”

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144 The following description of institutional interest in gender issues is adapted from Rowan-Campbell. Pg. 22.
145 Ibid. Pg. 22.
146 Ibid. Pg. 22.
147 Abirafeh. *Interview.*
Institutionally, organizations are experiencing varying levels of success implementing gender mainstreaming. UNDP has a jumpstart on many other development organizations in the area of gender mainstreaming, along with the ILO, World Food, and Oxfam. Within UNDP, the Gender Team (formerly known as the Gender Unit) is in charge of implementing and assessing gender mainstreaming across UNDP agencies. The Gender Team works with focal points across UNDP agencies to achieve these goals. Additionally, the Team coordinates a gender analysis of all UNDP projects and programs. Accountability in this area, however, is difficult. Hannie Meesters, head of the UNDP Gender Team, said there is a need for an accountability mechanism that covers the whole spectrum of development; however the vast nature of UNDP makes this difficult. The challenge of gender mainstreaming across UNDP is “highly underestimated [because] everyone is responsible but you cannot expect everyone to be knowledgeable.” Meesters views the effort to implement gender mainstreaming as “relatively successful and is getting somewhere,” but notes that there are continued challenges.

An initial challenge lies within individual UNDP offices. In the UNDP structure, a focal point on gender is required for every office, called a gender network facilitator. There are also regional advisors in every section, creating interagency networks. Yet, in practice, there is not always a gender expert in every office, unlike governance or other UNDP focus areas. Gender is usually only a focal point within UNDP offices. Focal points are typically lower-level women in the office and therefore do not carry the same amount of power as experts in other UNDP

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148 Meesters.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 As of mid-2005, the UNDP Global Gender Knowledge Network was managed out of the UNDP Caribbean SURF office. The Carribean Sub-Regional Resource Facility Annual Report 2005 reported over 900 members of the Network. Available: http://72.14.203.104/search?q=cache:TRet5r-
153 Meesters.
focus areas. Meesters is trying to implement the use of clusters to replace the current use focal points in order to give the area of gender more authority within the office. The cluster concept is superior to the existing model because it integrates upper-level staff in addition to lower-level staff, thereby involving someone engaged in the decision making process. Meesters wants upper level staff within the office to see gender as a responsibility.

Two major concepts of gender and development, gender mainstreaming and female empowerment, are often confused. Meesters cited the proper definitions: gender mainstreaming covers every element of development work and female empowerment is a specific type of program. Eirin Naess-Sorensen cited a lack of understanding and knowledge of how to incorporate gender within development agencies. Typically, there is already a project and the project developers have to “shove in the gender element.” The question is how to integrate gender without simply making it another box to check. Sorenson suggested using the “revolutionary human rights-based approach” found in many international treaties that is better than looking at immediate needs because it is more forward-focused and sustainable.

154 Ibid.
155 The cluster concept is defined in opposition to program ‘sectors.’ The UNDP Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery defines the two: “A ‘sector’ is a specific area of humanitarian activity. A ‘cluster’ is a group of organizations and other stakeholders working together to address needs in one of these specific areas. The key difference between these two approaches is accountability, and the responsibility of cluster leads to act as the ‘provider of last resort’…” The cluster approach is part of the Humanitarian Response Reform agenda. The cluster approach was initially designed to address the problem of ‘gaps’, i.e., areas where agencies were failing to work together to address common sectoral issues.” Clarification, Challenges and Report Back. Background Paper for CWGER Workshop. Geneva, Switzerland. 8–9 June 2006. Available: http://72.14.203.104/a/undpsearch?q=cachel:Le2Q8fm2M0J:www.undp.org/bcr/iasc/content/docs/CWGER_June2006_workshop_BACKGROUND_PAPER.doc+UNDP+cluster+structure&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&gl=us&ie=UTF-8.
156 Meesters.
157 Ibid.
158 Ibid.
159 Sorensen.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid.
political, when it is actually a political concept. Gender is not easily separated from politics because it is a subjective concept.

CRS-Herat staff members find gender mainstreaming “very difficult” in the Afghanistan context. While McNeil and Bowers found most NGOs or other development agencies interested in incorporating women into all of their programming, the organizations “are often understaffed or over-extended geographically to include women sufficiently.” Most often, working with women means employing female staff, yet “there is a surprising lack of qualified female staff who can travel.” The inability to travel results in the majority of women’s programming taking place in more urban than remote or rural settings. McNeil and Bowers knew of several organizations whose outstanding female staff members are not permitted to leave Kabul. Thus, their ability to implement female-focused programming in other, more rural areas, is limited or does not exist. An additional problem cited by the CRS-Herat staff members is that women are not typically hired to staff non female or child-specific programs. This often leads to general development programs omitting female perspectives and participation. Overall, McNeil and Bowers find that gender mainstreaming is “most successfully implemented by organizations with core women staff working across programs” in addition to organizations who “invest heavily in ensuring women are given special dispensation for travel with chaperones.” “Mainstreaming is difficult,” in McNeil and Bowers’ experience because women are not involved “in the bulk of work going on in Afghanistan.”

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162 Ibid.
163 Ibid.
164 McNeil and Bowers.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
Abirafeh describes gender mainstreaming as the latest in the gender discourse to call for gender equality. In order to achieve the objective of addressing men and women in their social roles, gender needs to be integrated at all levels and into all programs from the beginning.\textsuperscript{171} She notes that it is not sufficient to simply add gender to existing programs.\textsuperscript{172} Once dedicated to gender mainstreaming at the top levels of institutional management, there must be an understanding with those implementing the programs. Through gender mainstreaming, gender becomes relevant for all areas of programming and eliminates the need for a separate area of programming.

Gender mainstreaming entails many challenges before, during, and after implementation. Before implementation, Abirafeh cites problems such as low capacity for gender-focused work; rushing through gender analyses and the identification of problems and strategies; using analyses that are not applicable to local realities; and not linking gender analyses to the overall goals of each sector. When focusing on a particular sector, program designers must also understand the overall political, legal, economic framework in which these sectors operate. Other common problems are programs lacking country ownership because of too much donor influence and assuming that issues or problems are neutral from a gender-equality perspective.

Betsy Wier of CRS-Honduras underscores the unique challenges of gender-focused development, “You have to be extremely sensitive to local culture whether you agree with it or not. All feminist and gender issues break norms or challenge accepted ways of doing things. It implies change.”\textsuperscript{173} Given the specific cultural norms of any given community, Wier cites the need for “complex” design to include both women and men. “It is difficult not to impose upon them,” she said, “It is better to work through the equality; to take what they are doing and use it

\textsuperscript{171} Abirafeh. *Interview*.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{173} Wier.
to design the project in such a way that they are communicating better and working better together in a safe space.”

On the implementation level of gender mainstreaming, Abirafeh asserts that staff of all levels need to be trained “to understand the concept and what it means to bring it to fruition in programs.” She calls for international instruments such as the Millennium Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Beijing Platform. On this level, gender mainstreaming requires assessment of the effects of legislation, policies, or programs on women and men. This is seen in the ECOSOC definition of gender mainstreaming, which reaches beyond my thesis’ analysis of development institutions and programs to international norms and national legislation.

Abirafeh outlines three strategies for implementation: institutional commitment, operational policies, and operational collaboration. First, an institutional commitment requires dedication and accountability from senior level management. Staff at all levels need training in gender and capacity building and how to design and implement gender-related performance indicators. Gender should be addressed in all strategic plans and reflected in budgeting. Second, the implementation of gender mainstreaming should be seen in operational policies, frameworks and guidelines for design and planning. This requires guidelines for mainstreaming gender across programs and mechanisms for implementation, feedback, and learning. These mechanisms can include but are not limited to: gender analyses, lessons learned, best practice, and impact indicators. Abirafeh’s third strategy for gender mainstreaming implementation

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requires operational collaboration through joint contextual analysis with partners and capacity building for implementing partners.\textsuperscript{178}

During implementation, Abirafeh argues for a holistic framework. Adequate indicators need to be developed and incorporated into the monitoring of the gender equality aspects in the overall monitoring processes and mechanisms. Wier underscores that well-designed indicators are essential and that there is a way to write them well, stating that the key is to push beyond the general goals of the project. She notes,

“Some projects have gone back and modified indicators to push themselves to involve more women. For example, a project added a goal for 40% of the community council membership to be female. Yet there is a need to be realistic: going from 0% to nearly half is difficult. Implementers have to comply with indicators, so one must be dedicated when designing these goals.”\textsuperscript{179}

Thus, it is crucial for implementation to be executed with a thorough cultural understanding and grasp on the realities of implementation. This cultural understanding and an updated sense of on-the-ground realities can be gathered through frequent monitorings, evaluations, and assessments. Adjustments should be made as necessary. Frequently overlooked, gender analyses, research, documents, and reports need to have an impact on policy and practice.\textsuperscript{180}

Throughout the process, all categories and all levels of staff need to be held accountable to the goals and to the implementation of the strategy.\textsuperscript{181}

After implementation, Abirafeh contends that there needs to be an ongoing, long term commitment. Monitoring should be a major part of the project, as an ongoing assessment of project impact on women and men, gender relations, and levels of gender equality.\textsuperscript{182} She emphasizes that this requires “more than the processes and outcomes of the programs

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{179} Wier.  
\textsuperscript{180} Abirafeh. Interview.  
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.
Wier reiterates this point when discussing evaluation design, stressing the need to ask the right questions and the importance of focus groups. The group dynamic can reveal whether the time and scope of the project worked for particular women and men. Evaluators should note who is speaking and who is not in order to understand the dynamic.\footnote{Ibid. Emphasis the author’s.} In Wier’s experience, agriculture is the most difficult to integrate with gender because a lot of indicators are quantitative, such as the number of plants yielded. She said beyond these quantitative indicators, there is a need for human indicators: what are the women doing, the men, and the children.\footnote{Wier 2006.} Wier stresses the value of evaluators from outside the project, underscoring the need for an interdisciplinary team in order to assure a fresh, unbiased perspective.\footnote{Ibid.} The project’s designers should not be included because they are often blind to the issues.\footnote{Ibid.} In general, Wier argues for a focus on people, not numbers or statistics.\footnote{Ibid.} Abirafeh agrees with this focus on people, as she argues that evaluations should always keep in mind the overarching goals of poverty-eradiation and sustainable development.\footnote{Abirafeh \textit{Interview}.} Gender mainstreaming is not pursued for its own sake; rather it is a means to an end.\footnote{Ibid.}
Chapter 3: The Case of Afghanistan

Historical and cultural background

Because of their experiences in times of conflict, their increased responsibilities in communities, and their vulnerability to insecurity and violence, women often bring new perspectives to post-conflict reconstructions and issues of transitional justice.

The recent history of Afghanistan seems at first to attest that power shifted from one group to another—the Soviets, then one or another or the jehadin groups, then the Taliban. But this overlooks a very important fact: in each of these power shifts, women were consistently targeted for violence and oppression…It is the women who continue to be victimized regardless of what group seizes or is given power.

It is sufficient to say that women suffered under many regimes in Afghanistan, but women’s space under the Taliban was virtually annihilated. Since the capture of Kabul by the Taliban, women in Afghanistan have found themselves in the top of development and media agendas.

In order to understand the environment in which gender-based development projects are being implemented, I need to review the dynamic political and social history of women’s empowerment and disempowerment in Afghanistan. Afghanistan gained independence in 1919, then under the rule of King Amanullah and Queen Soraya. The King and Queen took a progressive position towards the emancipation of women, including a movement against veiling and seclusion, the establishment of a women’s magazine, the promotion of monogamy, and capability for women to study abroad. The constitution of 1923 included concepts of universal citizenship and human rights. In 1929, King Amadullah’s government fell soon after he tried to impose these new social reforms, including the abolition of purdah (separation and veiling of women) and establishment of coeducation. While the scope of women’s rights was inconsistent during the next three decades, 1959 brought the public unveiling of women of upper-class

families during the anniversary of Independence Day in Kabul. In 1977, the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) was formed, headed by Meena. Despite these advances, the violence surrounding the Communist coup of 1978 brought human rights violations and repression in Afghanistan to an unprecedented level.

“The number of victims in the period between the coup and the Soviet invasion will probably never be known but it has been estimated at between 50,000 and 100,000. There was a brief respite immediately after the Soviet invasion as the new government tried to gain legitimacy...During the ten years up to the signing of the Geneva Accords in 1988 an estimated 1.24 million Afghans lost their lives.”

In 1979, the Soviets invaded and took over the state of Afghanistan. In the midst of the Cold War, this sparked U.S. opposition, leading to President Carter ordering support to Islamic militias, or mujahideen, to fight the Soviets in 1980. Human rights violations suffered under Soviet rule forced millions of Afghans to flee the country. Men, women, and children were killed “apparently in reprisal for the actions of armed opposition groups” and for opposition to the government through peaceful protest. In 1986, thousands of political prisoners were detained for violating restrictions on the freedom of expression and association. Women prisoners testified to being forced to witness the torture of male prisoners. The human rights violations of the Soviet occupation inspired many Afghan women to participate in humanitarian work, both inside and outside of Afghanistan.

195 Defined by the Oxford American Dictionary as an Islamic-Arabic term for Muslims fighting in a war, or involved in any other struggle. Mujahid, and its plural, mujahideen, come from the same Arabic linguistic root as jihad ("struggle"). The word is the plural form of مجاهد, muṯḥāḥid, which, literally translated from Arabic means "struggler". In Islamic scripture, the status of mujahid is unequal to qaid—one who does not join the jihad. Soon after the battle of Badr, Muhammad is believed by muslims to have received a revelation from Allah raising the status of the mujahideen over the qaideen (Arabic plural of "qaid").
197 Amnesty.
198 Sultan and Levine. Pg. 24.
Eight years later, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed Geneva Accords regarding Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, resulting in the Pakistan-based Islamic militias announcement of the formation of the Afghan Interim Government. By 1989, the last contingent of Soviet troops had left Afghanistan. Soviet withdrawal left a power vacuum, leading to fractionalization, the rise of warlords, and corruption. Many note that the failure of the West or the United Nations to take an active role in rebuilding Afghanistan after Soviet occupation allowed the violence to persist. During this time, Amnesty International described extensive human rights violations:

“Extortion and kidnapping became commonplace; all parties to the conflict engaged in torture and execution of prisoners, and many women were raped, being targeted as the wives, sisters, or mothers of men regarded as enemies by one or another armed group. Educated women in particular suffered as they were accused of having violated Islamic norms of behavior.”

The continued lawlessness allowed for the rise of one faction of the U.S.-supported mujahideen, the Taliban, in 1992. The Taliban initially received support because of a belief that the group could impose order and restore a level of peace. This was not necessarily the case, as Johnson reported,

“In their relentless pursuit of control they too have shown little regard for the rights of others...Women’s rights have been severely curtailed and women have been beaten on the streets for supposed infringements of Taliban edicts. Punishments for crime include amputation of limbs, flogging, and sometimes even stoning to death.”

While these abuses continued, so did the expansion of Afghan women’s groups. To counter these oppressive policies, underground schools, health clinics, and income-generating programs were established by Afghan women in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran and secretly within

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200 Johnson. Pg. 42.
201 Johnson. Pg. 42.
Women who had experienced the expanded rights during the 1960s-1980s rose to lead these agencies with the assistance of women trained by international NGOs and UN agencies. The repression inflicted under Taliban rule manifest itself differently than under the mujahideen. Many women interviewed about this period in Afghanistan’s history argued that women’s situations were worse during the civil conflict that occurred between Soviet occupation and Taliban rule because so many women were murdered and raped by the mujahideen.

While the outright violence was not as consistently seen once the Taliban took over, the introduction of the Taliban regime inflicted an economic halt, with poverty and hunger leading many women to become sex workers or forced to marry Taliban members, their way of “ending prostitution.” Povey argues,

“The low status of women, and the consequent power imbalances between women and men that it generates, are the underlying reasons for harmful and discriminatory practices and physical and sexual abuse against girls and women in Afghanistan. The responsibility for this injustice and violence lies not only with the immediate family but also with individual communities, religious organizations, health and education institutions, professionals, and law enforcers.”

The Taliban militia moved through the country, taking over Qandahar in 1994, Maidan Shahr, Wardak, Herat, and Ghor in 1995, and finally Kabul in 1996. Glyn Davies, former U.S. Department of State spokesman, said in 1998 that there was “nothing objectionable to imposing Islamic law on the areas the Taliban controlled.” That same year, the Taliban militia massacred an estimated 2,000-5,000 ethnic Hazara Shia Muslims in Mazar. Skaine writes,

“United States officials appeared to welcome the Taliban taking of Kabul in spite of the manner

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202 Sultan. Pg. 24.  
203 Ibid. Pg. 24.  
205 Ibid. Pg. 173.  
206 Ibid. Pg. 175.  
in which they did so, because they believed the Taliban would help them with two big problems: controlling international terrorism and the heroin industry.”  

Yet this expectation was not realized as the Taliban allied itself with bin Laden and al-Qaeda. In the late 1990s, the UN Security Council passed economic sanctions against Afghanistan, followed by a U.S. cruise missile attack on Afghanistan to eliminate Osama bin Laden-run terrorist training camps. In response to the attacks of 9-11-01, the U.S. executed a military assault on Taliban positions in Afghanistan. The Taliban surrendered but many leaders were able to escape to the countryside.

In 2002, the *Loya Jirga*, with 180 out of 1,500 representatives being women, met and endorsed U.S.-choice Hamid Karzai as head of state. By 2004, the new Constitution was approved, the first presidential election was held October 9, and Hamid Karzai was elected as the first president post-Taliban rule. Parliamentary elections followed in 2005, the first time in over 30 years. The vote saw little violence and the parliament's first meeting followed in December 2005. The new Afghan constitution mandated 25 percent female representation; however the parliamentary elections produced 27 percent female representation. Political strides continue to be impeded by security issues. Fighting continues in 2006 between Taliban, al-Qaeda fighters, and the Afghan government forces. NATO has taken over from American-led troops in the southern portion of the country. Since this take over, Taliban fighters have engaged in a series of suicide attacks and raids against the international troops. More than 3,000 people died while

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208 Ibid. Pg. 56.
210 Defined as a “forum unique to Afghanistan in which, traditionally, tribal elders have come together to settle affairs of the nation or rally behind a cause. The phrase loya jirga is Pashto and means *grand council*. The institution, which is centuries old, is a similar idea to the Islamic *shura*, or consultative assembly. Historically it has been used to settle inter-tribal disputes, discuss social reforms and approve a new constitution.” –BBC “What is a loya jirga?” 1 July 2002.
fighting in Afghanistan in 2006, including over 1,000 civilians. It is estimated that the violence displaced 15,000 families, or about 80,000 people, in southern Afghanistan.

Five years after U.S. invasion, Afghanistan remains at the bottom of the Human Development Index. Problems are in all areas: Life expectancy for women is only 46 years, maternal mortality is high (1,600 deaths per 100,000 births), and female literacy is low (12.6 percent of females 15 and older). It has one of the one of the highest child death rates in the world (257 deaths per 1,000 live births) and 75% of the rural population live below the poverty line. Violence against women and girls remains. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission registered 704 cases of violence against women in 2006. This included 89 cases of forced marriages and 50 cases of self-immolation. These numbers are believed to be seriously unrepresentative of the true prevalence of violence “due to factors such as social stigma and poor response from the justice system.”

Disparity between policy priorities and implementation: U.S. influence on the Afghan agenda

We’re active. We’re strong in the pursuit of freedom. We don’t just talk a good game in America, we act. –President George W. Bush

One might be led to think that it is in this ‘war’ that women are finally present, as both sides declare their respective opinions as to women’s treatment, place in society, et cetera. But this impression is illusory. It is precisely in this realm of escalated rhetoric and assured contrasts that women are more absent than ever- instrumentalized within a discourse of evil that masks

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212 Ibid.
214 Human Rights Watch.
215 Ibid.
an ideology of hatred and aggression. Women are invoked, but not present, in this latest international conflict.\textsuperscript{217}

A stated policy goal of the Bush administration\textsuperscript{218} is the promotion of women’s rights. Public statements from the United States government during the invasion of Afghanistan reflected female oppression as connected to terrorism and inextricably linked to democracy building, thus framing women’s liberation as a main motive for overthrowing the Taliban. “Respect for women is a Bush Administration foreign policy priority”\textsuperscript{219} and similar policy statements emerged after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Prior to fall 2001, however, little linkage between women’s rights and foreign policy existed.\textsuperscript{220} With the unlimited monetary, political and media resources of the Presidential Office, the Bush administration had the authority to establish a new framework by which U.S. citizens could conceptualize the relationship between the invasion of Afghanistan and women’s rights.

The Bush administration articulated the importance of women’s rights in two ways. First, they established a clear contrast between civilized and terror based societies based on the level of respect for women. Secondly, they described women’s rights as essential element in the fight against further terrorism through the promotion of democracy. Each approach portrays the American way of life as superior to the Taliban in various interpretations of women’s rights. By recalling and emphasizing oppressive practices against women suffered under the Taliban, the Bush administration lays the groundwork for a “liberating” mission.

\textsuperscript{217} Franks. Pg. 137.
\textsuperscript{218} By ‘Bush Administration,’ I refer to President George W. Bush, First Lady Laura Bush, cabinet members, and other top executive branch officials and political advisers.
\textsuperscript{220} While one of Bush’s campaign slogans in 2000 (and again in 2004) was “W stands for Women,” little action resulted from this expression of support for women’s rights. Laura Flanders analyzes the validity of Bush’s pro-women’s rights rhetoric in The W Effect: Bush’s War on Women (2004).
The most explicit message coming from the Bush administration regarding the liberation of Afghan women came from First Lady Laura Bush in a radio address to the country in November 2001. She immediately detailed the oppression of Afghan women,

“Afghan women know, through hard experience, what the rest of the world is discovering: The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists…The plight of women and children in Afghanistan is a matter of deliberate human cruelty, carried out by those who seek to intimidate and control.” 221

By referring to the abuses suffered by women and children under the Taliban, Bush presents U.S. military intervention as the solution.

Ironically, the extended and in-depth history of Afghanistan shows that before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 the United States funded the mujahideen groups that led to the rule of the Taliban and did not intervene because of these violations of women’s rights. The U.S. did, however, lead UN Security Council Resolution 1267 in 1999 partly as a response to human rights violations against women and girls. 222 RAWA member Mariam Rawi discusses the origin of female oppression in Afghanistan,

“It’s clear that the problem women in Afghanistan face is fundamentalism itself- not just whether or not we have to wear a burqa or whether we are allowed to go to the cinema…But we also know that the situation was the result of the very inhumane and unjust policies of foreign countries such as the U.S. and other Western countries, along with Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which over the years gave a lot of support and help to fundamentalist groups. Perhaps the U.S. government never thought that there would be danger from its own creation; maybe it thought that the atrocities would take place only in Afghanistan, that only the women of Afghanistan would suffer, and that only things in Afghanistan would be destroyed.” 223

222 The clause in Resolution 1267 regarding the Taliban’s treatment of women and girls reads, “Reiterating its deep concern over the continuing violations of international humanitarian law and of human rights, particularly discrimination against women and girls…”
223 Quoted by Stephanie Coop in “Sowing the Seeds of Revolution” in The Japan Times Online 18 December 2001.
First Lady Bush’s comments echo Rawi’s observation from the U.S. government level: now that societies beyond Afghanistan are threatened, the U.S. is intervening. The ultimate message of the remarks equated the fight against terrorism to the fight for “the rights and dignity of women.”

Laura Bush’s rhetoric is effective because it portrays a contrast between the experience of American women and the experience of Afghan women. A statement by Lynne Cheney underscores this contrast, “The United States is a land where women are free, and we are defending the freedom of our daughters as well as our sons against a foe that has decided that women do not even deserve to go to school.” Again, the rights of women are equated with national security, as Cheney alludes to the dangers of allowing this foe to rule.

The problems and inaccuracies with the comparison are numerous. First, it creates an “us” vs, “them” concept that judges the experience of Afghan and American women as compulsion easily reduced to issues of “freedom.” Secondly, it demonizes the men of Afghanistan and the general culture of male-female relations in the nation. President Bush uses this rhetoric to classify the U.S., by respecting women, “civilized”, and the Taliban in Afghanistan, by oppressing women, “barbaric”. He remarked,

“This new enemy seeks to destroy our freedom and impose its views. We value life; the terrorists ruthlessly destroy it. We value education; the terrorists do not believe women should be educated or should have health care, or should leave their homes… We wage a

224 Bush, L. Bush said, “Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror -- not only because our hearts break for the women and children in Afghanistan, but also because in Afghanistan we see the world the terrorists would like to impose on the rest of us.” Pg. 1. As the first First Lady to give a full presidential radio address, Ferguson argues that “the fact that she was the sole speaker performatively underscores the content of her speech: that Americans, and the U.S. government, and the Bush administration in particular, already respect women. Indeed, George W. Bush respects women to such a degree that he will allow his women to perform a (relatively symbolic) presidential task in his stead.” Ferguson 2005. Pg. 21.

225 Bush, L.

war to save civilization, itself. We did not seek it, but we must fight it- want we will prevail.”227

This rhetoric also invokes a narrative of chivalry: those who respect and allow their women to go to school are civilized and those who do not are barbarians. The term “barbaric” becomes a common theme in the President’s remarks. In a 2004 speech, President Bush describes “barbaric” as difficult to understand for Americans, save for the example of Taliban oppression of women.228

Within this framework, Afghan women are portrayed as helpless victims in need of protection and their protectors are realized in the heroic figure of the United States, which is ready to intervene and protect them from the oppressive Taliban regime.229 Yet, as Afghan women are oppressed by the uncivilized Taliban men, there is no mention in this rhetoric of Afghan women being uncivilized. Rather than a position unconditionally supportive of women’s rights, the protection of women from oppression is a measurement of civilization, “The rhetoric of respect is only contingently related to rights, and it reinscribes traditional gender roles of chivalrous male protectors rescuing female damsels-in-distress.”230 This rhetoric creates stereotypes that all men are perpetrators and all women are victims or objects.

In addition to the use of women’s rights as an indicator for civilized/barbaric societies, the Bush administration uses the liberation of Afghan women as an essential element in democracy building. Under-Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula J. Dobriansky asserted the connection between women’s rights and democracy building,

228 Bush, G. W. and L. Bush.
230 Ferguson. Pg. 23.
“Ensuring women’s rights benefits individuals and their families, strengthens democracy, bolsters prosperity, enhances human rights and advances religious tolerance. It is at the core of building a civil, law-abiding society, which is an indispensable prerequisite for true democracy. The advancement of women has been a long-standing American goal. This administration has intensified that pursuit.”

Thus, the advancement of women’s rights is the way to democracy. Dobriansky’s comments also invoke the previous theme of contrasting liberated American females to oppressed Afghan females, as she refers to the “long-standing American goal” of advancing women’s rights, thereby insinuating that American women have achieved these rights and are ready to spread their liberation. In a 2004 speech, President Bush echoes this theme, assuring Americans that “the advance of women’s rights and the advance of liberty are ultimately inseparable.”

Five years after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, it is apparent that the experiences of Afghan women do not correspond with the Bush administration’s plan for liberation. The Global Women’s Issues Scorecard on the Bush Administration, updated by the Center for Health and Gender Equity, the Feminist Majority, and the Women’s Environment and Development Organization, periodically grades the Bush administration on “rhetoric” and “reality” of issues concerning women in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Scorecard has consistently given As, Bs, and Cs for “rhetoric” about women in Iraq and Afghanistan, yet gives Ds, Fs, and Incompletes for the “reality” of the Bush administration’s ability to act according to rhetoric. This inconsistency is felt on the ground, with many citizens of Afghanistan expressing frustrations with the now-popular “female liberation” rhetoric but little action.

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233 Ferguson 2005. Pg. 11. Ferguson argues that “neither of these [negative] responses is adequate” when assessing the Bush administration’s feminist security rhetoric, arguing rather that the feminized rhetoric is a positive reflection of the success feminists have had in altering security rhetoric.
Lina Abirafeh’s dissertation work maintains this argument. During her time as a NGO staff member and UNIFEM official gathering Afghan female and male perceptions on gender-based development her interviews and experiences working in Afghanistan, Abirafeh concludes,

“Interventions that raise expectations of empowerment encourage women to step outside pre-existing gender roles. In so doing, gender and power relations are challenged. Women face greater risk if the environment for social change is seen to be an external imposition. Women may suffer further when gender-focused interventions fail to take gender issues into account, focusing only on women.”

When asked about their perceptions of the international community presence in Afghanistan, Afghan women saw the international community as promising rights that women cannot achieve and cannot understand. Many women found fault in the way that the U.S. and others came in claiming to “liberate” Afghan women, as it disregarded previous progress made by Afghan women. The Bush administration’s statements uphold this perception, lacking an acknowledgement of previous progress made by Afghan women. When Afghan men were asked about the international community presence, they stated that no one had ever asked their opinions before because the international community seems to prioritize women over men. They perceived international organizations as coming into Afghanistan with the belief that all women are victims and all men perpetrators. Also, they see international organizations stating that they are acting on behalf of Afghan women when they are not doing so, rather serving their organization’s interests.

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235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
237 In a joint statement, President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush stated that Afghan women are “writing a new chapter in their history,” because the one-time “virtual prisoners in their homes” are now aiding in the rebuilding of their country. George W. Bush and Laura Bush 2004.
239 Ibid..
240 Ibid.
over the interests of Afghan women, international organizations are taking women away from religion, community and culture.\textsuperscript{241}

While the Bush administration demanded “visible, measurable, on-the-ground results,”\textsuperscript{242} an evaluation of the United States Agency for International Development implementing agency, the Office of Transitional Initiatives’s (OTI) presence in Afghanistan found that the “publicity that Afghan women received about their plight was not supported on the ground by an assistance strategy articulated by OTI or programming developed by OTI’s implementing partners IOM [International Organization for Migration] and Ronco.”\textsuperscript{243} As the quick-response mechanism supporting U.S. foreign policy in transition countries, OTI “could have selected one issue affecting Afghan women to which it could have been positioned to respond strategically, but OTI-financed projects tended to be small, randomly-selected projects.”\textsuperscript{244} An evaluation revealed a lack of planning is that, “No coherent strategy to support Afghan females was developed by OTI to demonstrate consistent, nationwide U.S. support for the women whom U.S. forces had apparently liberated.”\textsuperscript{245}

Oddly, the Bush administration’s public policy goal of promoting women’s rights was not adopted by the main implementing agency in Afghanistan. The major issue appears to be institutional priorities. Stewart noted that in cases like Afghanistan and other areas in the Middle East, there are issues beyond USAID because of the White House publicity campaigns.\textsuperscript{246} Due to these competing interests, USAID is not in the lead when establishing project priorities.

While OTI is at fault for going into the country without a clear and workable plan for gender-

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{243} Dev Tech Systems, Inc. and Pact. Pg. 4.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid. Pg. 4.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid. Pg. 4.
\textsuperscript{246} Stewart.
based projects, the situation in Afghanistan for gender-based programming was more challenging than the simple “liberation” rhetoric from the Bush administration portrayed it to be. No one expected OTI or the U.S. government to resolve all problems for Afghan women. However “the spotlight shone by the U.S. on Afghan women living under Taliban rule raised expectations that assisting Afghan females in post-Taliban Afghanistan would be a top priority.”\(^{247}\) These expectations were far from realized. Promises of progress on the ground, such as President Bush’s update in 2004,\(^ {248}\) were and continue to be unfulfilled. Rhetorically, this is significant because instead of lending official support or money to preexisting groups like RAWA, the United States “‘saves’ Afghan women, American-style: allowing a few token females into the puppet government set up in the Taliban’s place.”\(^ {249}\) A review of politically-based female empowerment programs reveals a focus on numbers, not impact.\(^ {250}\)

The struggles of implementing agencies, whether OTI or other internationally-based organizations discussed in later sections, are indicative of the public policy problem of living up to expectations. In practice, the Bush administration’s articulation of the policy priority of “liberating” women is unclear. The “liberation” of women could mean empowerment or simply participation. These two interpretations require different levels of policy and funding priority. Based on the work thus far of U.S. implementing agencies, the Bush administration has not enabled either approach to be successful. Without a clear policy agenda, transforming the best intentions of U.S. foreign policy into a changed reality on the ground remains a challenge for U.S.-based development agencies. The reality in everyday Afghan society, discussed in the


\(^{248}\) Bush, George W., and Laura Bush. 2004. President Bush remarked, “We’re building women’s centers in Afghanistan and Iraq that will offer job training and provide loans for small businesses and teach women about their rights as citizens and human beings.”

\(^{249}\) Franks 2003. Pg. 149.

\(^{250}\) See footnote 372 on assessing impacts in political projects in the section on assessing impact.
following section, demonstrates difficulties in the application of gender and development theory, development institutional problems, and Afghan culture-specific challenges.

The Challenging Reality of Implementation

*International organizations tell human rights and women’s rights to people, but they think of their interests and politics instead of Afghan women. These organizations are just saying, not doing.*

*What we have realized is that foreigners are not really helping us. We think that foreigners do not want Afghanistan to be rebuilt.*

*Attempts to inject aid into the government have hit a major bottleneck: in 2005 and 2006, the government spent only 44 percent of the money it received for development projects. Meanwhile, according to the Ministry of Finance, donor countries spent about $500 million on poorly designed and uncoordinated technical assistance.*

The post-conflict development agenda for Afghanistan is saturated rhetorically by a focus on female empowerment. In an examination of male and female perceptions of the international community presence in developing nations, I find at least a partial explanation of governmental and non-governmental development agency experience. Then, I will review the implementation of USAID-OTI gender-focused development projects. I will conclude this section with a concise examination of international and national NGO experiences in gender-focused development.

The reviews of the many agencies’ experiences reveal common challenges including: translating “gender” into projects for both women and men rather than into projects just for women; living up to various donor policy priorities in a difficult cultural environment; and planning, implementing and assessing projects with appropriate amounts of cultural and environmental understanding.

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252 Quote from an elder who sheltered President Hamid Karzai when he worked underground during the rule of the Taliban. Quoted in Rubin. Pg. 60.
253 Ibid. Pg. 76.
Despite the prevalence of gender-based development dialogue, no one has asked men what they feel about the gender-based development emphasis in Afghanistan. To gather a comprehensive understanding of all Afghan citizens’ opinions on the international community presence and the use of ‘gender’ in development projects, Abirafeh asked both men and women the same set of questions to gauge their perceptions. After being asked what it means now to be an Afghan woman, women replied that it is important to be an Afghan woman because the Afghan woman is now a popular object. This translates both positively and negatively. While Afghan women received increased attention in the media and in stated policy priorities, they did not experience change on the ground. Afghan women felt that they were not sufficiently consulted on the direction and pace of social change.

“This demonstrates a denial women’s agency and in their ability to act on their behalf and achieve gains. Efforts for ‘empowerment’ are destined to failure if they are not generated by the women who are meant to be ‘empowered.’ The result is that Afghans unwillingly inherit a concept that bears little resemblance to their priorities and lacks a solid foundation.”

Afghan men responded positively when describing women’s role in society, commenting with an old saying, “One hand shakes the cradle, the other shakes the world.” Interviewees were also asked what it means to be an Afghan man. Women responded that men historically have held public and high-profile places in society. They noted that men are currently the public face of the household and the protector of the family while women were working to achieve harmony in the household. Women interviewed also noted a crisis of masculinity, likely due to the expanding roles and opportunities for women. Men responded that Afghan men need to be the head of the family, breadwinner and responsible. When asked a further question about men’s

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255 Abirafeh. Gender Dynamics. October 2006. Pg. 3
256 Ibid., Pg. 3.
involvement in the reconstruction process, women commented that men are neglected and that they would feel better if trainings were also provided for men. Men feel less important and that their priorities are not being addressed. Abirafeh concluded that Afghan men will not “subscribe to the international community’s agenda as long as they perceive that they are denied an equal share of its support.”

One man commented that the “outside world came to give Afghan women freedom but freedom can only be won from the inside.”

Part of the “outside world” that this man is referring to is USAID and its implementing agency, the Office of Transitional Initiatives (OTI). OTI’s mission is to support U.S. foreign policy objectives “by helping local partners advance peace and democracy in priority countries in crisis. Seizing critical windows of opportunity, OTI works on the ground to provide fast, flexible, short-term assistance targeted at key political transition and stabilization needs.”

While charged with supporting U.S. policy priorities, OTI did not realize the policy goals outlined in the area of female empowerment and gender-focused development by the Bush Administration. Oversights in project design, implementation, and assessment combined for few successes in the area of gender-focused development under OTI’s direction.

In October 2001, OTI began developing a programmatic approach for Afghanistan from Pakistan in; however it did not address longstanding cultural and, emerging from Taliban rule,

258 Abirafeh. Gender Dynamics. October 2006. Pg. 3.
260 The following section relies significantly upon one source (see footnote 261) because of the lack of gender-focused evaluations of USAID and OTI’s work in Afghanistan. A more comprehensive study would require an on-the-ground review of OTI and USAID’s projects, which was unable to be achieved in this study.
261 USAID Transition Initiatives: Home. 8 February 2007. Available: http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/transition_initiatives/. Created in 1994, OTI is a part of USAID’s Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance. It lays the foundation for long-term development by “promoting reconciliation, jumpstarting local economies, supporting nascent independent media, and fostering peace and democracy through innovative programming.” “OTI programs are short-term -- typically, two to three years in duration. OTI works closely with regional bureaus, missions and other counterparts to identify programs that complement other assistance efforts and lay a foundation for longer-term development. OTI programs often are initiated in fragile states that have not reached the stability needed to initiate longer-term development programs. OTI strategies and programs are developed and designed to meet the unique needs of each situation.”
political division between the genders. Some OTI staff members were skeptical of gender programming in Afghanistan because gender mainstreaming would require separate or special consideration for female programming on an individual project-by-project basis. In OTI’s infrastructure projects, “women were seldom, if ever, consulted on project design…so in some cases adjustments had to be made after project completion.” Generally, there was a “shocking” lack of information about Afghan country conditions, social, and political dynamics, especially in regards to how to support Afghan women. Due to this lack of attention towards the development of gender-focused projects, a report assessing the problems with OTI’s gender-focused programming commented, “To jumpstart its programming and increase its chances for success, therefore, OTI would probably have benefited from a better understanding of Afghanistan’s social dynamics, especially gender issues, and targeted its program accordingly.” Not all evaluations of OTI’s work in Afghanistan were negative, noting that OTI funded some “meaningful and important” projects that benefited women during its tenure in Afghanistan.

While OTI seemed to operate with the understanding that programs designed for Afghan females were beneficial, there was little analysis of which types of programs would best serve Afghan women during the transition period. Due to OTI’s limited tenure in Afghanistan, the organization had an interest in rapid project completion; therefore more time-consuming projects

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262 DevTech Systems, Inc. and Pact. Pg. v.
263 Ibid. Pg. 2. OTI wanted to promote “healing” of the entire population, fearing that focusing on one segment of the population would alienate the other and deter the transition process.
264 Ibid. Pg. 28.
265 Ibid. Pg. 31.
266 Ibid. Pg. v. During this time, OTI had a document written by a World Bank staff member called, “Gender Needs Assessment for Afghanistan.” The document proposed that gender perspectives be mainstreamed into all development and reconstruction programs in Afghanistan and that civil society organizations be consulted throughout the process. No specific OTI actions are outlined in order to achieve outcomes of improvements in social indicators, a functioning Ministry of Women’s Affairs with provincial outreach, gender training for senior civil servants, and inclusion of women in local shuras. Pg. 5.
267 Ibid. Pg. 5.
268 Ibid. Pg. 2.
such as projects targeting females were “less desirable” because they took longer to implement.\textsuperscript{269} DevTech and Pact criticized OTI as needing to focus more on balancing the need for “rapid” with “quality” projects because some of the most positive impacts on women were ones in which project duration was not the defining element because difficult initiatives that pushed the social agenda were implemented.\textsuperscript{270}

OTI’s implementing partners, in particular IOM, also overlooked the importance of female consultation in project design. The partners, like OTI, did not create a means for gathering and incorporating input from Afghan women into project design.\textsuperscript{271} Specifically, “Women were not asked what types of programs they would find useful and, after project implementation, their experiences were seldom incorporated into lessons learned and new projects. Instead, project ideas were generated during discussions among IOM, NGOs and government officials. Women were expected to accept the projects designed to ‘benefit’ them.”\textsuperscript{272}

Projects that, traditionally, were less likely to include women, such as employment in construction projects, were not actually discussed with Afghan women, rather decided between the contractor and IOM.\textsuperscript{273} This resulted in community reluctance to participate in some projects, although most times, after discussion, communities agreed to participate.\textsuperscript{274} If the discussions were undertaken before project design, community concerns could have been integrated into design and thus implementation could proceed without delay, resulting in more efficient and community-based project creation.\textsuperscript{275}

In the first phase of OTI’s work, July 2002, only one out of eight objectives mentioned women. In the civil society and government structure area, OTI proposed building “stronger

\textsuperscript{269} Ibid. Pg. 2.
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid. Pg. 2.
\textsuperscript{271} Ibid. Pg. 30.
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid. Pg. 30.
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid. Pg. 30.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid. Pg. 30.
\textsuperscript{275} Ibid. Pg. 30.
connections between civil society and emerging government structures by engaging key civic
groups as partners to bridge communities and government entities in the identification and
implementation of projects with particular attention to women and women’s issues.”

While only given this limited reference in OTI’s strategic objectives, attention to gender issues
constituted a theme in some of OTI’s programming. In this early phase of the OTI program,
during the summer of 2002, a gender sectoral expert was one of five American long-term
technical experts hired by OTI for USAID through IOM. This expert was limited, however,
because of a “lack” of funding for gender-focused projects. Also, a brief, “‘initial’” gender
assessment was produced. There is no evidence of any later, more detailed assessment.

276 Ibid. Pg. 30.
278 Ibid.
279 Dev Tech Systems, Inc. and Pact. October 2005. Pg. 10. Overall OTI grant approval increased from an average
of 13.8 to 21.3 grants per month. Grants with a component targeting women and children increased from 4.3 to 4.9
project grants per month.
280 Ibid. Pg. 10.
281 Ibid. Pg. 10.

From June 2002 until the Constitutional Loya Jirga in December 2003, the pattern OTI
grant approval increased; however grants targeting women and children only marginally
increased. Over this 18-month period, 89 of 394 (23%) of grants approved by OTI had a
gender component, according to the OTI database. This represented some 28% of total
funding in this period. In June 2002, OTI issued a document to implementing partners
explaining the funding criteria for small projects with budgets from $5,000 to $50,000.
Criteria outlined in the document included “supporting the Afghan government, promoting
ethnic balance, encouraging community participation, and reintegrating women into society.”

The criteria provided policy direction, but lacked detail or guidance. During this same
period, OTI began to fund activities specifically targeting women’s income generation, although
such projects were in contradiction to USAID gender mainstreaming policy. Some 13 projects
 totaling $294,000 (1.5% of funds this period) supported income generation training for small-scale, traditionally female activities.  

Implementing agency IOM staff members stated that “training women in health and education topics was the real objective,” but this seems unlikely since most attention was focused on skills training. Female (and male) community members were highly disappointed when these schemes failed to generate desired income, primarily because income-generation training was not sufficiently supported with marketing skills. Ironically, during this time, IOM cited increased attempts to gender mainstream through an assessment of “the implications for men and women of any planned action, including legislation, policies or program, in all areas and at all levels.” Yet an evaluation of IOM’s work, apparent in the aforementioned example of women’s income generation, revealed that women were not consulted for every project and that proposed projects did not fully take into account how projects would impact women.

An example of poor program design and implementation is the construction and furnishing of 14 Provincial Women’s Centers in January 2003. OTI did not choose to undertake this project; rather it was directed to construct these centers by an earmark from the U.S. Congress. No party involved foresaw the difficulties that would arise. During the same time, implementing partner IOM proposed adding a provision to all construction contracts that a certain percentage of workers should be female. IOM debated this issue and came up with an “arbitrarily selected” figure of 6.9%, determined by averaging staff member opinions of feasible

282 By “traditionally female activities,” I refer to activities related to tailoring, poultry raising, literacy, business literacy, food hygiene, market gardening, and beekeeping, as outlined in Dev Tech Systems, Inc. and Pact, October 2005. Pg. 12.
283 Ibid. Pg. 12.
284 Ibid. Pg. 12.
percentages of female employment that could be imposed on contractors.\textsuperscript{288} It seems that in this project, OTI missed an opportunity to consider more thoughtfully establishing percentages of female participation, how to require contractors to hire women, and the best way to promote a proactive and more rational approach to IOM. Afghan women are often eager to work, and men will support activities that bring more income into the household.

During the period extending from the Constitutional Loya Jirga to President Karzai’s election in November 2004, grant-making for projects with female beneficiaries were “unfocused and unsubstantial.”\textsuperscript{289} Forty-six of 182 total grants, around 25%, had at least one component targeting women.\textsuperscript{290} These grants required $1.63 million, or about 12% of total funding during this time.\textsuperscript{291} Traditional income-generating projects for women constituted $279,000 of this money.\textsuperscript{292} Projects included poultry raising, beekeeping, soap making, tailoring, carpet weaving and cheese making. Small programs on computer training were implemented in Herat and carpentry training in Kabul. Yet these projects “continued to lack creativity” and were designed by IOM or local NGOs, not from Afghan communities or OTI advisors.\textsuperscript{293} The number of women trained was viewed as “not significant” and “unlikely to produce a ‘ripple effect’ of change.”\textsuperscript{294} The projects did succeed, however, in bringing women out of their homes. The evaluation of OTI’s work explains,

\begin{quote}
“Training sessions allowed women to be seen beyond the walls of their compound and meet other women several times for a particular purpose acceptable to the local community. Traveling to and from training centers or the homes of other villagers placed women in the public sphere, a domain normally denied to them by local culture. In rural
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{288} Ibid. Pg. 13.
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid. Pg. 17.
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid. Pg. 17.
\textsuperscript{291} Ibid. Pg. 17.
\textsuperscript{292} Ibid. Pg. 17.
\textsuperscript{293} Ibid. Pg. 17.
\textsuperscript{294} Ibid. Pg. 17.
areas, this physical movement and visibility were probably the greatest project outcomes and could have been an explicit objective of OTI-funded activities for women.”

Thus, the potential for success in gender-focused development projects clearly was present. The project achieved the first step of bringing women together into the public sphere. However, success fell short because OTI and IOM did not capitalize on this achievement. Dedication to expand the scope of the programs was not present. OTI did not realize and capitalize on the positive outcomes of these and other smaller projects that had positive results for women in the public sphere.

In the final phase of OTI’s work in Afghanistan, from President Karzai’s electoral victory to OTI program end in June 2005, only 8 grants out of 50 had a component targeting women. The grants totaled $187,000, including $60,000 for a Provincial Women’s Center, and constituted slightly more than 5% of total funding. Grants were mostly for small-scale income-generation training.

Generally, OTI had no explicit strategy to focus on women’s empowerment and did not see this as part of their mission in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, it approved many grants in which there was a good deal of gender focus or mainstreaming. OTI funded the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) to implement income-generating projects; however communities were often hesitant to participate because of the top-down approach in project design. NGO engagement with communities came at the implementation, rather than the project development stage and therefore did not respond to community needs. This could have been improved by asking community members about project design at the first stages of development, in order to establish ownership and therefore willingness to participate within the community. In general, women’s

295 Ibid. Pg. 17-18.
296 Ibid. Pg. 18.
297 Ibid. Pg. 23.
income-generation activities were not successful, but “they could have been a more effective part of community participatory activities had they been implemented by specialized NGOs.” NGOs established in Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s by Afghan refugee women had NGOs had “significantly more experience, making these NGOs more successful in working with communities. Newer organizations could not have been expected to perform to the same standards.”

OTI overlooked the opportunity to work with preexisting NGOs that were operating in Peshawar before the defeat of the Taliban. These organizations “could have been sub-contracted on a trial basis beginning in the second half of 2002.”

Throughout this time, OTI attempts at gender mainstreaming were inconsistent. As one analyst observed, “project implementation that could in some way benefit women and girls lacked an overarching national strategy, resulting in a patchwork of barely-related projects.” Females, especially in rural areas, had similar needs nationwide; therefore replicable programming should have been piloted early in the process, tested and then refined by NGOs rather than “invented” for each project. DevTech and Pact argued that this replicable strategy could have been simple, for example using a table of proposed projects with input following from Afghan women. Specifically, programs aimed improving participation would have benefited from greater attention to gender issues. In general, the evaluation of OTI’s projects revealed that it was “preferable to mainstream gender issues into broader objectives, rather than create stand-alone, gender-based activities.”

298 Ibid. Pg. 27.
299 Ibid. Pg. 31.
300 Ibid. Pg. 31.
301 Ibid. Pg. 31.
302 Social Impact, Inc. Pg. 11.
The issue of better integrating women into projects can be addressed simply. This requires a basic understanding of the cultural restraints placed on women by the Taliban. The evaluation of OTI activities concluded that Afghan women need more visibility:

“If they are visible, they exist; women who exist can play a role in society, receive education and health care, and vote. OTI and IOM focused on the mechanics of projects, schools, and complicated income-generation training. What women really need are culturally acceptable places to which they can travel outside the home. This simple physical movement, banned by the Taliban, places women in the public sphere and restores their freedom of movement.”

This conclusion emphasizes the need for historical and cultural understanding of the project environment. OTI did not address the fundamental need for female mobility and therefore overlooked existing cultural restraints on their programs.

This lack of historical and cultural context in OTI program design and implementation was exacerbated by a lack of funding. Several interviewees in the DevTech/Pact evaluation of OTI concurred that there was a lack of funding for gender-related projects despite the need for a gender advisor to counsel on the requirement for gender-divided project activities in Afghanistan.

Additional evidence of this is found in funding priorities. During the same time period where gender-based projects were “lacking” funding, $4.85 million, over half of OTI’s budget at that time, was given to support the Emergency Loya Jirga and the salaries of civil servants and international consultants.

In the final program area of monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment, OTI and implementing partner IOM lacked a unit to assess the quality of the work OTI funded, despite the fact that “the need was evident from the beginning.”

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303 Ibid. Pg. 13.
304 Ibid. Pg. 9. Security restrictions limited the number of USAID and OTI staff allowed in Afghanistan at one time, so a gender expert was hired through an agreement with Mercy Corps and then through IOM.
305 DevTech Systems, Inc. and Pact. Pg. 9.
306 Ibid. Pg. 7.
of IOM’s infrastructure projects required additional funding to be completed and 25 percent of infrastructure projects visited had “quality” issues. Commenting on overall USAID monitoring and evaluation behavior, Chayes stated that, in her experience, USAID’s only manifestation of assessment is an “absurd amount of reporting.” “You don’t see people going out and looking at the quality of asphalt used on that road, or the level of the gutter that is now blocking the road perpendicular to the road that the gutter is being built for, etc.” she observed, “Here, the devil is in the details, and you need a lot of people out on the ground, haggling with contractors [and] requiring performance.”

The assessment element of development programs requires community investment. Chayes noted, “I have been running my soap factory for almost two years, on a daily basis. Only now am I really sure that people are getting the idea of what we’re about.”

The international and local NGOs working in Afghanistan had and continue to experience varying levels of success. On the international level, I will review experiences of UNDP, UNIFEM, Women for Women International, and CRS. In this discussion, common challenges and creative ways to integrate local NGOs emerge. The international NGO example, while not perfect, demonstrates more culturally-sensitive project development, gender as opposed to women focus, and more of a focus on monitoring and evaluating projects.

**UNDP: Establishing governmental and non-governmental coordination**

Meesters noted that UNDP in Afghanistan has been working on gender issues and is doing a “good job in Afghanistan as compared to many other country programs.” UNDP recently approved $296,000 for civil society empowerment projects in Afghanistan. This series

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307 Ibid. Pg. 7. Results from a May 2005 report by Altai Consulting.
308 Chayes. *Interview.*
309 Ibid.
310 Ibid.
311 Meesters.
of consultations, focus groups, questionnaires, and strategic support to civil society organizations began in December 2006 with the first consultative meeting in Kabul City.\textsuperscript{312} The consultations action plan includes a focus on female participation to enrich gender equality and broader democratic involvement and intends to result in a document highlighting recommendations of civil society actors that should be heard in the implementation of the National Development Strategy.\textsuperscript{313}

In order to address the “near complete exclusion of women” in the current Afghan government, UNDP supports the creation of the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC). The IARCSC, charged with the overall public administration reform process, is establishing a “national framework for training and development of Afghan civil servants, and has launched a project to promote gender balance and equal opportunities in public administration” with UNDP support and a budget of $454,000.\textsuperscript{314} To encourage the promotion of gender awareness and policy reform within the Afghan government, UNDP is supporting the MoWA to provide gender training courses in eleven different ministries.\textsuperscript{315}

Additionally, UNDP opened a Training and Advocacy Building at the MoWA in late 2004 in order to launch a CISCO Networking Academy Programme to teach internet technology skills to women.\textsuperscript{316} In 2005, this project with MoWA planned to establish a gender-training institute at Kabul University.\textsuperscript{317} Building development institution relationships, UNDP is building up a unit to coordinate organizations’ actions, as there has been a lot of training on the corporate level but a lack of coordination within the field is deterring the implementation of this

\textsuperscript{313} Ibid. Pg. 6.
\textsuperscript{315} Ibid. Pg. 14.
\textsuperscript{316} Ibid. Pg. 14.
\textsuperscript{317} Ibid. Pg. 14.
At the headquarters level, Meesters assures, “No matter other organizations’ actions, UNDP will stay in Afghanistan.”

**UNIFEM: Engendering governance through empowerment**

UNIFEM has many coordinating projects with UNDP. UNIFEM works in four general areas: strengthening women’s institutions, engendering governance and peace building, supporting women’s economic security, and promoting women’s rights and protection against violence. In the area of women’s institutions, UNIFEM is also supporting MoWA and is a part of the Afghan government’s Gender Advisory Group that works on gender mainstreaming and budgeting within the National Development Framework. A second program area for UNIFEM is working to engender governance and peace building. UNIFEM’s program is “designed to complement the work of the government, the reform commissions, international donors, UNAMA and other UN agencies.” To support women’s economic security, UNIFEM has conducted an assessment of women’s socio-economic needs in order to develop tools for analysis and recommendations for the integration of gender issues into economic and social policies. UNIFEM is working to promote women’s rights and protection against violence in two programs. One program works with MoWA, the Ministry of Information & Culture and UNESCO to increase female presence in the media. The other program is designed to disseminate information on and promote the application of the UN Convention on the

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318 Meesters.
319 Ibid.
321 Ibid.
322 Ibid.
323 Ibid.
Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Afghanistan in 2003.  

Abirafeh, who worked at one time for Women for Women International and UNIFEM, talked about the concept of empowerment in the development field,

“I subscribe to the idea that no NGO can ‘bring empowerment,’ per se. What's important is that organizations work at the back end providing the tools and resources that Afghan women's NGOs need to take action on their own terms and in their own socio-cultural contexts. The local groups do the empowering. [The international community] should exercise a little humility and remind ourselves that we are actually not there to do the empowering.”

This comment underscores the importance of working with local NGOs in order to be successful. Abirafeh sees local NGOs as

“The best conduits of messages of social change because they understand the context (socio cultural, political, etc.) and know best what messages will and won't work. They know what members of the community to target, who the natural leaders are, and who the potential opponents will be. They are the ones we should be supporting through capacity building, sharing knowledge and know how, and financial aid, without making them jump through hoops to get it.”

It is all to frequent that interventions by the international community overlook cultural conditions. Abirafeh warns that such programs “run the risk of doing a disservice to women by implementing programs and policies that have not taken all possible repercussions into account.” Programs intended to empower women may in fact place them at increased risk. The case of Afghanistan underscores this concern, as “the rhetoric used to justify aid intervention stemmed from the language used to justify the ousting of the Taliban- a military intervention.”

**CRS: Strategic project design**

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324 Ibid.
325 Abirafeh, Lina. *Interview.*
326 Ibid.
327 Abirafeh, Lina. “Gender Dynamics.”
328 Ibid.
In the CRS experience, McNeil and Bowers observe many international NGOs working with local women’s NGOs. In Herat, where their CRS office is located, women’s NGOs are supported by organizations including, but not limited to: CRS, Counterpart, the UN, and FAO. Often “stretched very thin with programming agreements with many organizations and not enough staff to carry them all out,” local NGOs need financial and capacity building support.\textsuperscript{329} These NGOs do not have core funding to build capacity and staff under a more long-term vision, making them “very dependent on project to project funding.” In order to overcome this common problem, CRS has provided core funding to one local NGO in Herat for 18 months.\textsuperscript{330} Support includes “capacity building in financial systems as well as programming.”\textsuperscript{331} McNeil argues that “this is the best way to empower local women’s NGOs.”\textsuperscript{332}

Like other government and NGO development agencies, there is within CRS-Herat an emphasis on understanding the distinction between “gender” and “women’s” programming.\textsuperscript{333} Within women’s programming in Afghanistan, “the challenges are many.”\textsuperscript{334} McNeil and Bowers cite low numbers of female staff, restrictions on female staff movements, community attitudes towards women’s projects, and lack of funding as regularly experienced difficulties. The CRS-Herat staff members emphasize the importance of targeting both men and women, “It is difficult…to implement women focused projects without also doing other programs aimed at men. Many traditionally women oriented vocations or activities seem to be devalued in some

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{329} McNeil and Bowers.
\item \textsuperscript{330} Ibid. Eighteen months refers to the 18 months previous to January 2007.
\item \textsuperscript{331} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{332} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{333} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{334} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
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By overcoming the challenges of limited female staff and restricted movement, CRS has experienced success in rural areas. McNeil and Bowers reflect,

“CRS has been able to initiate some very interesting women's activities in quite remote locations. In many of our program areas, the goodwill towards our women's programs has led to widespread community support to the participation of women, and they have been able to save and invest in small enterprises, provide loans to community members for medical care and other purposes.”

Funding comprises a constraint as well because it is “difficult to carry out truly empowering programs in a short period of time. So much donor funding in Afghanistan is short term or focused on alternatives to opium poppy that women's initiatives easily fall by the wayside.”

*The Afghan experience as a reporter and member of an Afghan NGO: Cultural challenges*

Despite CRS’ success working with local NGOs in Herat, Chayes has a more negative perception of the international-national NGO relationship in Afghanistan. Chayes has outsider experience as a reporter for National Public Radio and first-hand experience working with a local NGO, Afghans for Civil Society, and now as founder of a soap cooperative in Kandahar, Afghanistan. She notes, “Both local ‘NGO’s- in fact contractors that live off donor projects- and international NGOs and IGOs have a heavy reputation for treating this place basically as a trough to feed from.” Chayes argues that corruption is found at every level of development organizations,

“The very least that the international NGOs are guilty of is spending way too much money on themselves for quite little impact on the ground. At worst, they are complicit in the fraud of the local NGOs they contract out to, for kick-backs. WFP [World Food Program] is famous for this. But it’s pretty much across the board.”

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335 Ibid. They elaborate, “For instance, in an agriculture research program we completed an input given to women increased the value of some fruits by 30-50%. However during an evaluation it was ranked below the inputs given to men that were not as valuable. It was a women's thing and the men predominantly ignored its value (this is a simplified explanation of its low ranking and we would need to discuss in detail).”

336 Ibid.

337 Ibid.

338 Chayes. *Interview.*
Working with local NGOs is indicative of a dedication to cultural understanding and working within a community rather than a top-down approach. Chayes, living and working in Kandahar, is the only international who speaks the language, as the two other women who do are about to leave. Additionally, she more or less lives on par with, and among, Afghans. In her book *The Punishment of Virtue*, Chayes states that her “bias in favor of local action immersed in local knowledge was to be confirmed and reconfirmed during [her] time in Afghanistan.”

She comments on these conscious choices,

“In order to promote cultural understanding here, you have to have a very savant mix of realism regarding the current situation of Afghanistan and what it has done to the psychology of Afghans, without letting yourself slide into a kind of racist cynicism, which I have often seen. That is, toe a fine line between blind idealism (which I suffered at the start) and racist cynicism (‘They’ve always been like this, always will’).”

Despite Chayes’ cautions about the relationship between international and local NGOs due to corruption, there is potential for increased cultural understanding and, therefore, a higher chance for project success when working with communities during the design stage. CIDA reports,

“The biggest challenge for women in post-conflict Afghanistan will be to ensure that [the international] commitment to gender equality translates into policies that are embraced by Afghan decision makers and provide an adequate framework for programming that actually makes a difference in the lives of women and girls in the country. Of course, Afghan women have already [begun] doing this for themselves.”

While CIDA’s report of preexisting women’s organizations is correct, these local organizations consistently struggle to make a large difference because of a lack of resources. Local women’s organizations’ have been unable to access funding from the UN or other multinational organizations, national governments, private foundations, and individual donors despite the

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340 Chayes Interview.
increased international interest in Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion. Women Waging Peace cited lack of capacity, sustainability, and communications difficulties as adding to the difficulty in obtaining funds. These perceptions stem from the “newness of some Afghan women’s NGOs, the resistance of some male Afghan NGO staff who worry about competition, and the perceived difficulties Afghan women face in being mobile and assertive in their own communities.” Other issues cited include language barriers and restrictions in movement and interaction with others.

**Gender vs. Women**

“If you call it ‘promotion of women’ then it's fine with me. I can definitely share in the need for that. But then don't call it gender. Of course it makes men angry. So at least try to be honest about it.”

Another central issue for gender-focused development projects in Afghanistan is the misunderstanding of the term “gender.” Usually interpreted in programs as “women,” there is no easily translated term for “gender” in Dari or Pashto, only “sex.” As previously mentioned, “gender” in development projects is often seen as projects just focused on women, so many in Afghanistan see “gender” as “women.” An Afghan human rights activist emphasizes this point, “It has never been gender mainstreaming. It is gender segregation, just highlighting the differences between men and women. Dividing them, not bringing them together. We say this is the policy for women only, and this is the policy for everybody else. And that creates a reaction. It's the first thing internationals talk about, women, not gender.”

McNeil and Bowers also note that cultural norms about male-female interaction restrict male participation in discussions on gender. They commented, “Men don't attend in numbers that

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342 Sultan, Pg. 24.
343 Ibid. Pg. 24.
344 Ibid. Pg. 24-25.
345 Ibid. Pg. 25.
346 Quote from Afghan woman in Abirafeh Interview.
347 McNeil and Bowers.
348 Abirafeh Interview.
would really draw them into the discussion.” A gender working group at Kabul University is working to create a word for gender; however McNeil is not sure she sees the full utility of creating a new word as opposed to beginning work on advancing a gender equality agenda. In the experience of McNeil and Bowers, discussions about female participation frequently include comments from men that the number of women focused programs like hygiene and vocational training should be increased rather than mainstreaming or including women into infrastructure or other traditionally “male” programs. Women are not as culturally accepted into general development programs, rather relegated to more “traditional” female activities.

Bowers and McNeil find many NGOs working on gender awareness trainings for male and female staff, although this is only a “first step.” They comment that only with a long-term investment will this issue be resolved. They note,

“Creating space for interaction, insisting on women's voices in all programs, use of PRA techniques, etc. will all help, but this is a serious issue that will take many years to really work through. Furthermore, so many critical staff are short-term that it can feel like always starting from scratch. Institutional memory is a critical component of progress.”

Abirafeh suggests that the term “gender” must be first understood at the senior, policy-making level. She finds that many members of the international community do not use the word in its robust sense. Abirafeh cites two examples of “hijacked” words in addition to “gender.” First, "gender disaggregated data." It actually means “sex disaggregated data,” but it is not common for anyone to say “sex” anymore. This semantic hijacking affects development policy and programming in detrimental ways. Her second example is the term "anti-Semitism." It is

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349 McNeil and Bowers.  
350 Ibid.  
351 Ibid.  
352 Ibid.  
353 Abirafeh Interview.  
354 Ibid. Emphasis the author’s
used to mean anti-Jewish. However, Arabs are also Semitic peoples, and therefore by definition cannot be anti-Semitic, unless they are self-hating. Yet this is not corrected either.\textsuperscript{355}

To further demonstrate the inflation of “gender” within development agencies, Abirafeh uses the example of the term “civil society.” She cites Almut Wieland-Karimi’s comment, “The inflating use of the term dates back to the influx of internationals that followed the defeat of the Taliban...in 2001. It has become a vogue word used among international donors and agencies and their respective Afghan partners,” because Wieland-Karimi could have been talking about the term “gender.”\textsuperscript{356} “Wieland-Karimi elaborates that Afghans quickly learned that this term would guarantee them international support, regardless of their understanding of the term itself and what it might take to bring the concept to fruition,” Abirafeh adds.\textsuperscript{357} An Afghan woman leader agreed:

“‘What I see is that most people translate things from other languages and bring these things to Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, no one asked what gender means. This word, it is different everywhere. For us, it's important to know and to find out for ourselves what gender means in Afghanistan.’”\textsuperscript{358}

Abirafeh’s experience is that “gender in Afghanistan translates, de facto, into women.”\textsuperscript{359} “Despite ambitions,” she says, “gender is not often mainstreamed in post-conflict recovery activities. Rather, women as a category are singled out in isolation from their wider social, cultural and family contexts.”\textsuperscript{360} “This is not gender equality,” an Afghan woman leader of an NGO said, “‘It has created a big problem in Afghan society. Men were already sensitive to women's issues. And now the international community is trying to talk about women, women's

\textsuperscript{355} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{356} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{357} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{358} Abirafeh, Lina. “Lessons.” Pg. 13
\textsuperscript{359} Ibid. Pg. 13.
\textsuperscript{360} Ibid. Pg. 13.
rights. These things will again make men sensitive.” 361 Abirafeh sees this misuse of “gender” as a potential danger, fueling “men's perception that 'gender' is a negative word. To them, gender has become synonymous with women's power over men.” 362 Her argument is underscored by an Afghan man’s comment, “‘Most people think that gender is about increasing the power of women while decreasing the power of men. Women over men. That's what they think.’” 363

I argue that these perceptions and problems in practice demonstrate the need for truly gender-focused programming, working with men and women together. An Afghan woman stated, “if we work for the rights of women, we should have the support of men. These gender activities should be with both men and women.” 364 In Abirafeh’s conversations with Afghan women for her dissertation research, “many felt that there was room to work in partnership with men.” 365 Afghan women “preferred to work for advances in the context of the family and community - both women and men together” and the majority “suggested that attempts be made to conduct gender programs focusing on the family, within the structure of Afghan communities, yet no one was aware of such efforts.” 366 Women interviewed additionally “expressed concern that they had been singled out because of the pervasive view from the aid community that they were victims in need of saving.” 367 Abirafeh warns that simplistic conclusions that women are victims and men are perpetrators alienate male supporters who could be mobilized for women’s participation. 368 Only through a gender focused, or more clearly stated as a family or gender holistic approach, will these simplistic conclusions be overcome. This can be achieved when

361 Ibid. Pg. 13.
362 Ibid. Pg. 13.
363 Ibid. Pg. 13.
364 Ibid. Pg. 14.
365 Ibid. Pg. 14.
366 Ibid. Pg. 14.
367 Ibid. Pg. 14.
368 Ibid. Pg. 14.
there are clear distinctions between ‘gender’ and women’ and community ownership of project objectives.
Chapter 4: Moving forward

What can be done?: Improving gender-focused development initiatives

*The World Bank is devising a program that will enable the [Afghan] government to hire the technical advisers in needs, rather than trying to coordinate advisers sent by donors in accord with their own priorities and domestic constituencies. The United States should support this initiative, along with a major crash program to increase the implementation capacity of the ministries.*

Concerns about the international community’s presence in Afghanistan are valid. How each organization, whether government or non-government affiliated, conducts its work adds to the Afghan citizen’s impression of the development world presence. Without focusing on preexisting community or nation-wide organizations already promoting women’s empowerment, these international organizations are missing opportunities to use culturally viable structures to implement their policy objectives. Each organization will want to implement their policy objectives as efficiently as possible. To be successful, however, these organizations must place greater emphasis on community engagement *during* project design, not after. As the OTI example proves, implementing partners were not as successful in executing programs when they had to spend the majority of their time convincing communities to participate.

From this brief overview of a few major organizations involved in gender-focused development work in Afghanistan, several challenges and program shortcomings emerge. The examples of OTI/USAID, UNDP, UNIFEM, CRS, Women for Women International, and local organizations demonstrate the need for a thorough cultural understanding in order to properly design gender-focused programs. In order to design the project to fit the individual community’s needs and assist in this pursuit, agencies should have invested more in each community *before* project implementation. Issues such as percent of female participation, timing of

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369 Rubin. Pg. 76.
implementation, and program content needed the input of both men and women from the community. Also, the term “gender” needs to be properly communicated rhetorically and pragmatically in programs. If a program is just for females, it should be labeled appropriately, not as a “gender” program. Finally, many organizations are lacking effective evaluative indicators. This inherent challenge of assessing project impact within development projects will be addressed in the next section.

To improve gender-focused development initiatives, organizations should aim to improve each stage. First, agencies should enhance project design and implementation. A thorough gender analysis before project design or implementation can solve some of the challenges faced by USAID, UNDP, CRS, and others in Afghanistan. Gender analysis allows development organization staff members to understand how poverty affects women, men, girls, and boys differently and to identify differences between the needs and concerns of a community’s women and men. The analysis identifies specific aspects of gender relations and inequalities that are present in each project’s context and examines their implications for project design and implementation. Proper gender analysis requires involvement of women researchers in data collection, consultation with women within the community in question, and interaction with local, progressive, gender-aware organizations in which women are the source of information. Questions involved in gender analyses are focused on who holds power, controls resources, makes decisions, sets agendas, and which women and men gain or lose from these dynamics. To answer these questions, a project design team needs baseline data disaggregated by sex, the involvement of women, men, boys, and girls in data collection, identification of existing

371 Ibid.
372 Taken from Moser 1993 in her discussion of “gender diagnosis. Pg. 97-98/
373 “Rough Guide.”
women’s organizations as possible sources of existing information, and the inclusion of gender analysis in terms of reference so researchers have the vocabulary and skills to gather the information and implement the findings.\textsuperscript{374}

Gender analysis is a means to an end: serving as a tool to design and implement project that takes into account the perspectives and needs of both women and men, these analyses can equip development projects to best address imbalances in power.\textsuperscript{375} I need to emphasize that gender analyses are only the first step in designing and implementing programs. Setting the cultural context for the community in question is essential, but the project must come to fruition. Aiding in this process is another concept, gender planning.

Another important concept at the project design and implementation stages is gender planning. Introduced comprehensively by Moser in 1993, the gender planning process includes the interrelated stages of “gender policy, gender planning and the organization of implementation.”\textsuperscript{376} Moser outlines six methodological tools that serve essentially as performance indicators: gender roles identification, gender needs assessment, disaggregated data at the household level, intersectorally linked planning, WID/GAD policy matrix, and gender participatory planning. This concept underscores and expands the concept of gender analysis because gender analysis must be included in gender planning.

Community consultation is also essential at the project design and implementation stage. As the USAID/OTI example in Afghanistan demonstrated, projects were more difficult to implement when the community was not engaged until the consultation stage. Communication with the community from initial project design should be routine. Kardam warns, “Even when there is a seeming fit between project objectives and broader recipient and donor goals, effective

\textsuperscript{374} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{376} Moser. \textit{Gender planning and development}. Pg. 6.
performance cannot be guaranteed because such a fit doesn’t reveal whether the project is a priority for the recipient or not.”377 Thus, constant communication with the community must be established early and maintained throughout the project.

Finally, there needs to be a better institutional and community level understanding of the distinction between “women” and “gender.” As is apparent in the Afghanistan example, the inability to translate “gender” into Dari or Pashto, coupled with the practice of labeling projects for women as “gender” projects confuses the two terms. To deal with this effectively takes vision, time, cultural sensitivity and sustained investment in a community.

Assessing Impact: The constant challenge

“It is extremely hard to measure impact.”378

In this section, I highlight the importance of assessing project impact as a way to improve future gender-focused development projects.379 While project design and implementation are important, impact assessment has the potential to influence future projects through well-designed indicators for gender-focused assessment and gender accountability. Impact assessment is the


378 Sorensen.

379 Another avenue to explore this would be in the Afghan elections where the use of quotas could be reviewed. The new Afghan constitution explicitly affirms that every Afghan citizen, male or female, has equal rights and duties before the law. Thus, every Afghan woman has the right to vote and to run for political office. The constitution reserves 25% of its seats in the lower house of Parliament and 50% of the presidential appointments to the Upper House for women. 85 seats were filled by women, 17 seats over the 25% allotment. (U.S. State Department website: http://www.state.gov/g/wi/rls/58651.htm.) While the 25% female requirement is progressive when comparing other countries, “skeptics are concerned that women are once again being used as window-dressing and that this progressive quota serves to appease international donors at the expense of laying a foundation for genuine participation.” (Abirafeh 2005). Sultan reports, “In the political sphere, women have increased their representation at each stage of the political process. However, these gains have, thus far, increased the presences more than the impact of women. They have not yet enabled women to contribute in ways they most can: by encouraging moderation and democratic norms, delivering critical services, and helping protect the rights of minorities.” (Sultan 2005. Pg. 35). Thus, an in-depth analysis of Afghan elections and overall political participation would reveal acute challenges in assessing the impact of the female ability to vote and the use of quotas to impose participation.
“systematic analysis of the lasting or significant changes—positive or negative, intended or not—in people’s loves brought about by a given action or set of actions.”

Impact assessment can only be improved with properly designed indicators. In order to properly assess gender-focused projects, gender-sensitive indicators need to be developed and those indicators need to be a part of projects from the initial stage. Concepts to consider throughout the project’s duration include: ownership, initial project design, existing data sources, information management, baseline information, and partnerships. Indicators can be gender sensitive in four areas: if they are disaggregated by sex, gender-specific, implicitly gendered, or chosen by women. Characteristics of indicators that are disaggregated by sex are calculated separately for men and women so that comparisons on the differential impacts of the project on men and women can be assessed. In Chemonics’ use of gendered benchmarks, we see an example of this in practice, such as how many women they have worked with and how many women attended their programs. Gender-specific indicators are those that measure organizational practices that are specifically targeted to men or women. This consists of the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of policies intended to increase women’s empowerment in practice. Indicators that implicitly are gendered make no explicit reference to gender but if interpreted in a broader context, it is clear that women or men are particularly affected.

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383 UNDP “Part One.” Pg. 8.  
384 Stewart. Stewart notes that this is not across the board, however, as it depends on the technical field.  
385 UNDP “Part One.” Pg. 8-9.  
386 Ibid. Pg. 9.
Finally, if an indicator does not refer to gender whatsoever but is a reflection of differences in women’s and men’s priorities and preferences, the indicator is chosen by women. These four types of indicators can be implemented throughout the project process. Six ways to design better indicators of gender-focused progress are: first, integrating implications for data collection into the initial project design, especially accounting for the cost of impact assessment; second, using existing sources of data; third, involving key stakeholders when selecting program performance indicators; fourth, planning how indicator information will be managed, stored and retrieved; fifth, obtaining past data and baseline data at the inception of a project; and, sixth, establishing partnerships with other NGOs and government agencies to aid in data collection to lower costs.

Indicators that are more gender-focused indicators appear easily achieved in theory, but in practice these objectives are difficult to attain. UNDP continually strives to assess impact by using international human development reports and other indicators used for gender to assess long-term progress. With any project, Meesters noted the initial attempt to formulate indicators, but each project could be improved with more impact-related indicators. Sorensen stated that the assessment of project impact requires finding indirect indicators, requiring a move beyond numbers to secondary indicators. After implementing programs, “UNDP and other organizations typically look for general change and hope that they were a part of it.” Sorensen suggests training people within countries, such as statisticians, to work on female-based statistics, such as violence against women statistics that will affect project success. This is difficult because

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387 Ibid. Pg. 9.
388 Leete.
389 Meesters.
390 Sorensen.
women are often reluctant to share sensitive information; however it is important to have national staff in this area to build trust.

From the for-profit development organizational perspective, Stewart stated that Chemonics is in the process of trying to create more collective indicators. Because each project has several deliverables under each contract, this is done on an individual basis. They are called to perform towards USAID goals. Other things come about through work, making development “more an art than a science at times.” According to Stewart, very few organizations assess their projects a few years after project implementation. This is a huge discussion point for the NGO community because programs “need to be assessed two years from implementation, looking at people trained, whether they are they still at work and are still using skills learned” in order to comprehensively review impact. Chemonics is moving toward assessing impact over raw numbers on a piecemeal basis to overcome this “extremely difficult” task of assessment. One problem is that you need the government to allow you to go back into the area and perform the assessment. These are political decisions, necessitating the discovery of a way to navigate and compromise along the way because it is a struggle to try to get the most appropriate people to understand the expectations. Stewart noted that USAID conceives gender as very important, but she does not particularly see a specific focus on every project. She observed, “Gender is sometimes a large focal point, sometimes not.”

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391 Stewart.
392 Ibid.
393 Ibid.
394 Ibid.
395 Ibid.
396 Ibid.
397 Ibid.
398 Ibid.
The Afghanistan case lacks impact assessment. McNeil and Bowers observe NGOs such as CRS, CARE, and AKF as “making steps in impact assessment through longer-term geographic focus and improved M&E systems. Also AREU has some interesting assessments available. However, it is still imperfect.” In Chayes’ experience, this imperfect system goes back to a lack of monitoring during project implementation. She argues,

“Even before impact, you have to monitor it as it is being implemented. Are these blankets that the head of the women’s association says are being sewn by handicapped women actually being sewn by handicapped women, or is she buying them in the bazaar? That raisin factory is entirely run by women…Why is it that every single one of them is a Farsi speaker? You have to get very very close to the ground to properly monitor projects.”

This lack of monitoring and assessment that Chayes observed can be improved through increased gender accountability. Defined as “responsiveness to women’s interests and incorporation of gender-sensitive policies, programmes and projects in state institutions and donor agencies,” gender accountability fosters institutional responsibility for gender-focused project success. Accountability eliminates the previously mentioned problems within development institutions and gender mainstreaming. Gender can become “everyone’s job, everyone’s responsibility” when all are held accountable.

This call for data collection, impact assessment, and gender accountability is not quickly achieved in a post-conflict environment. The issue of gender focused development in Afghanistan is not easily solved. The current lack of security, poor infrastructure and difficulties in communication between agencies at the grassroots level combine to impede the formation of an environment conducive to data collection, impact assessment, and demands for accountability. Only through a more secure, stable environment will these problems in gender focused development.

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399 McNeil and Bowers.
400 Ibid.
401 Chayes. Interview.
402 Kardam. Pg. 44.
development disappear. Yet gender focused development is an integral part of the solution. Only through a renewed effort to assess gender issues in Afghanistan with the understanding that this will aid in improving security and infrastructure will the overall environment improve.

**Lessons Learned: Recommendations for future projects**

A renewed effort in Afghanistan will require more intelligent, culturally sensitive projects. The following recommendations stem from several sources, taking questions and recommendations for action from existing frameworks, along with my own analysis of the Afghanistan-specific challenges. The comments on each stage of project life are general, however influenced by the Afghan example, in order to ask relevant questions in other post-conflict environments. These recommendations are not comprehensive; however I argue that they highlight the essential elements to consider in light of my research of the shortcomings in Afghanistan.

**Design**

At the most basic level, project design can be improved to be more culturally and gender-sensitive. Questions to ask during this stage include:

- What is the definition of ‘gender’ in the specific cultural context? If no corresponding term exists, how will the project be defined?
- Has the community been adequately consulted so that the project is ‘owned’ by community members and not the implementing organization?
- How will security and infrastructure levels affect the project?
- What are the practical and strategic gender needs arising from this cultural understanding?\(^{404}\)

\(^{403}\) The following recommendations are culled from several sources: Moster 1993, Gell and Motla 2002, Oxfam Australia 2005, and March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay 1999.
• What are the cultural, political, and economic roles of males and females within the community? Address levels of resources and ability to access resources.

• What are the gendered power structures?

• How can the project be designed to include culturally and gender appropriate indicators of assessment? In other words, how will the goals of the project be evaluated?

Actions should correspond with these questions: staff gender training, gender analysis, the establishment of gender accountability, community consultation, and inclusion of a gender expert in all project design stages.

**Implementation**

In the next stage of project implementation, community consultation must be continued, along with an understanding of existing structures and an emphasis on cooperative relationships between development organizations. Questions at this stage include:

• What are the cultural, political, and economic factors affecting implementation?
  - How will access to resources in these three areas affect project implementation?

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404 Practical and strategic gender needs are defined by MATCH (1991, Pgs. 39-40) Practical needs are those which, if met, would assist women in their current activities. Meeting practical gender needs responds to immediate needs in a specific context (such as inadequate living conditions) and does not challenge gendered power structures, although these may cause practical gender needs. Strategic gender needs are needs which, if met, would enable women to transform existing imbalances in power between women and men. These are indicative of women’s subordinate social status and vary by cultural context. (Summary taken from March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay, Pg.57-58).

405 Gender analysis frameworks were consulted to create these recommendations. Examples of frameworks that can be used in project design include but are not limited to: Harvard Analytical Framework and People-Oriented Planning, the Moser Framework, the Gender Analysis Matrix (GAM), the Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis Framework, the Women’s Empowerment (Longwe) Framework, and the Social Relations Approach. All of these frameworks are analyzed in greater detail in March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay’s *A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks* (1999).
• What are women’s roles in the project? How will these be monitored and achieved?
• How will the project work with other agencies (especially local)?
  o How comprehensive are memorandum of understandings between partner organizations?
  o Are there regular meetings and evaluations of each other’s work?
• How will existing gendered power structures be affected and/or overcome?
• How will current security conditions and levels of infrastructure affect project implementation?

Actions corresponding with this stage’s questions include: application of gender analysis, continued staff gender training at the community level, and an emphasis on gender accountability.

**Monitoring/Assessment**

At the final stage of monitoring and assessment, community consultation must continue, seen through culturally appropriate, gendered assessment indicators. Questions at this stage include:

• How have women’s and men’s, boys’ and girls’ lives been affected culturally, politically, and economically?
  o How has the project affected women’s and men’s activities? Levels of women’s and men’s access and control?
• Has there been significant overall change in the project area? To what extent will the changes be sustained?
• Did women participate as anticipated? Why, or why not?
- Were the project design and implementation stages sensitive to gender issues and cultural contexts?
- How efficiently and effectively have resources (monetary, personnel, community) been used?

Actions in this stage include the use of properly designed assessment indicators and a gender-balanced evaluation team of personnel not involved in project design or implementation. While project designers and implementing parties should be a part of assessment indicator creation, a separate evaluation team allows for a more unbiased appraisal of the project’s successes and shortcomings. There will be a tendency to rely upon quantitative data; however qualitative data must be gathered. The partner agency most rooted in the particular community should gather this data, but there also must be a clear and direct linkage with the sponsoring agency.
Conclusion: Lessons learned from Afghanistan and implications for the future of gender-focused development

The challenges in gender-focused development projects in Afghanistan are discouraging but not debilitating. On the most basic level, development organization relationships are strained. Complicated relationships between development agencies, whether governmentally or non-governmentally, not-for-profit or for-profit based, are exaggerated when addressing gender issues. Many organizations are working towards better communication between agencies, which will prove helpful towards successful gender-focused initiatives in future projects. From a practical perspective, the evolution from WID to GAD and emergence of gender mainstreaming have not led to clear agendas for addressing gender in any development organization. Addressing institutional challenges within the GAD framework and gender mainstreaming as a tool for development will not be easy. It is an evolving process that is dependent on personalities and funding support. Only by institutionalizing gender-focused priorities will resolve this. Making gender everyone’s responsibility will require not only a shift in macro development institutional practice but also a change in cultural tendencies to address gender inequalities separately from the mainstream.

Despite the often stated U.S. policy priority of female empowerment and the experience of five years, many challenges lie ahead for gender-focused development in Afghanistan. The history of Afghanistan depicts a country where women’s rights have ebbed and flowed with fundamentalist leadership and international influence on Afghan national politics. Thus, the U.S. influence has had the potential to establish gender equality that was more easily sustained through an understanding of the cultural and political history. Yet, as the review of OTI revealed, this thrust of gender-focused development into the spotlight has not yet been realized
on the ground. USAID will have to work with other international and local organizations such as UNDP, UNIFEM, CRS, Women for Women International, Afghans for Civil Society, Women Waging Peace, RAWA, and others in order to better focus this policy agenda to practical solutions. The experiences of these non-governmental agencies are not without flaws. However, they demonstrate more consistent attention to the need for community consultation and an understanding of imbedded cultural challenges.

A substantial potential exists for better designed and implemented gender-focused initiatives at every project stage. First, project design and implementation stages can be improved through expanded cultural knowledge, contextualizing and understanding “gender” as opposed to “women,” and consulting communities at all times. Next, in the monitoring and assessment stage, improved impact assessment has the potential to affect the success of future projects through better designed gender indicators. With more advanced indicators, projects will be assessed more comprehensively, allowing for more intelligent projects in the future.

Only with institutional dedication to gender-focused development will the situation in Afghanistan and elsewhere improve. From the headquarters to the implementation level, an understanding of differential project impact on women and men is a basic element of every development project. Gender is inherently a part of development projects and should be treated as such, through an investment in the education of managers and staff and intelligent project design. While not debilitating, the Afghanistan case is not encouraging. It is an immediate problem that the U.S. needs to address by working with the needs of each Afghan community before its shortcomings in the female empowerment policy objective are used by extremist conservative opponents to regress into Taliban-like treatment of women. Another recession of female empowerment in Afghanistan will result if action is not taken.