Women, Men and Gender Equality in Development Aid – Trajectories, Contestations

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Gender equality as a development goal is increasingly popular with donors, from the World Bank to Danida. But what does gender equality actually mean? The article explores different notions of gender equality as seen by donors, by women's organizations and by post-colonial feminists. The article also discusses different but co-existing images of women in development contexts.

Since the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 issues of gender have had central positions on Western donors' development agendas. Through the series of UN Word Conferences on Women leading up to Beijing – Mexico City 1975, Copenhagen 1980 and Nairobi 1985, with other UN conferences on human rights and population issues in between – international women's organizations were mobilizing with increasing force. The Beijing Platform for Action (PfA) adopted at the conference, testifies to the success of this persistent mobilization. Since 1995 the PfA has worked as a reference point for local and international women's groups, who have struggled to hold governments and donors accountable to the PfA's statements.

In recent years, however, it seems as if such pressure is no longer needed. Increasingly governments and donors seem to have adopted on their own behalf an agenda of gender equality and women's rights –

key points of the Beijing PfA. This paper will focus on developments from 2000 onwards,[1] taking the 2000 Millennium Development Goals (the MDGs) and the 2001 World Bank report *Engendering Development* as points of departure. It is significant that among the eight Millennium Development Goals, 'gender equality and empowerment of women' comes in as goal no. three, immediately after 'eradication of extreme poverty and hunger' (goal no. one), and 'universal primary education' (goal no. two). It is also significant that the World Bank devotes an entire report to issues of gender. This of course is very good from a feminist point of view – but it is also an occasion for raising additional questions. What is the driving force behind this new agenda? Do governments and donors on one hand, and women's organizations on the other, see 'gender equality and women's rights' in the same way? And among women's organizations – do *they* see things the same way?

In trying to grapple with some of these questions, the paper will look critically at Gender-and-Development (GAD) conceptualizations. With a point of departure in the Beijing PfA a universalized GAD language has been developed by donor agencies, spearheaded by the World Bank. This language increasingly has become *the* language of development regarding issues of gender, also used by international women's organizations and local NGOs. The standardized GAD language even impinges on academic work in the global South, e.g. in Africa.[2] But which are the characteristics of this language, what is included and what is left out? This is one line of inquiry in the paper. Another line of inquiry zooms in on images of women in GAD discourse. It seems that two rather different and apparently contradictory images of women are coexisting in donors' argumentation regarding the importance of support to women through development aid. One is the image promoted by the World Bank from 2001 onwards, by inspiration from the Beijing PfA, and picked up by the Danish development agency Danida (among others): the active, enterprising woman, the one who carries the world on her shoulders, and the one in whom it makes sense to invest. The other image dates further back in North/South relationships, being re-vitalized in the US War on Terror, also from 2001 onwards. This is the image of the poor and suffering woman, in need of help and protection. How do these apparently very different images go together, and how do they – in spite of differences – converge?

The paper is divided into six sections, dealing with different aspects of the issues raised above. Section one looks at differences between women's movements, pointing to North/South inequalities in the very process which gave rise to the Beijing PfA, also hinting at profound limitations in GAD discourse, limitations which will be further discussed in sections five and six of the paper. Sections two to four look at the different images of women and gender applied by donors (based on analysis of selected World Bank and Danida publications) tracing their historical roots, and looking at their contemporary implications. Sections five and six go back to the issue of limitations and shortcomings in international GAD discourse: What does gender equality actually mean? *Is* it a universal good? And what is left out of Gender-and-Development conceptualizations?

The Beijing Platform for Action on women and gender – a double edged sword?

As pointed out by Amina Mama (Nigeria/South Africa/US) it was during the UN decades for women that African feminists first made their voices heard on the international scene. Nevertheless, she also talks of 'United Nations feminism' as a bureaucratized version of feminism (Mama 1997:

416) and of the ways in which the donor push for women's projects "created huge institutional needs for WID expertise, which in turn generated a bureaucratic discourse on women in development … [that] had little to do with the everyday concerns of ordinary women" (Mama 1997: 417). Ifi Amadiume (Nigeria/US) also sees the Beijing Platform for Action as a two-sided phenomenon. On one hand it was a unique achievement of pressing governments and policy makers to take action on women's issues; on the other hand, however, she also sees "how easy it is for European women to return from Beijing with an illusion of a truly global process and a harmonious global sisterhood, with all women saying the same thing in spite of diversity" (Amadiume 2000: 10). Amadiume makes a comparison between the UN Conference on Women in Nairobi 1985, and the Beijing conference a decade later: "The intensity of interaction[3] has led to participants almost speaking the same language, as opposed to the creative dissent and tensions of Nairobi 1985" (Amadiume 2000: 10). Between Nairobi and Beijing the language has changed:

> With this shift from a community or grassroots-articulated focus to professional leadership imposed from above, issues and goals have become repetitive in a fixed global language, and discourse is controlled by paid UN and other donor advisers, consultants and workers (Amadiume 2000: 14).

A more detailed account, given by Adetoun Ilumoka, Nigerian lawyer and women's health activist, makes it possible to follow and feel, during the processes and meetings of preparation for the UN conferences in the early 1990s, the clashes, misunderstandings and uneasy moments as experienced by African women confronted with the fixed global language and the professional NGOs and/or feminists from the North. Ilumoka, member if the Nigerian group of women for the ICPD Preparatory Committee, tells about Nigerian women's uneasiness related to resolutions regarding rights to abortion, a key point at the Cairo International Conference for Population and Development (ICPD).

> The discomfort of many of the African women participants at the NGO Forums for the Preparatory Committee meetings and the ICPD itself, with advocacy for abortion rights threatening to dominate discussions, was ignored, glossed over or even labeled as anti-feminist by many Northern colleagues. (…) The universalizing tendencies of powerful Northern women's lobbies with access to the UN and greater resources were evident in the ICPD process (Ilumoka 2010: 121).

The picture painted by Ilumoka is one of Northern women's lobbies perceiving themselves as acting to the benefit of women worldwide, but in actual fact promoting a certain language connected to particular state constructions (Western liberal democratic conceptions of positive law) and particular economic interests. Her analysis shows how the concept of 'reproductive rights' as promoted in Nigeria approaches the issues more from the points of view of doctors and producers of modern contraceptives than from the points of view of local women. Economic aspects of the language of rights impacts also in other ways on local levels in Nigeria: in order to access donor money, you'll have to speak in the language of the donors. As noted by Ilumoka: "The magic words 'reproductive rights' brought forth donor funding for projects professing to be focused on promoting women's rights, whilst any critique or reservation was met with suspicion. ... This fear of not fitting into funding priorities or of loosing funding by articulating an alternative emphasis or process is rife among Nigerian and African NGOs" (Ilumoka 2010: 130).

Summing up from Ilumoka's account

one notes the following: a) the fixed global language – including the language of rights, and Rights Based Approaches (RBAs) – is rooted in the North, making sense in relation to Northern institutions, but not necessarily – and not in the same way – in relation to socio-economic conditions elsewhere; b) the Northern women's lobbies see themselves as based on solidarity and acting in the interests of all women. They fail to see that presumed universalities are rooted in their own positions; c) the global language is supported by economic necessity: if as a Southern NGO you want to access Northern funding you'll have to frame your concerns in the fixed global language; attempts to develop bottom-up conceptualizations, with a point of departure in local experience, do not get very far.

Gender Inequalities are costly to development

"Gender Inequalities are Costly to Development". This phrase is repeated several times in the May 2000 'consultation draft' preceding the 2001 World Bank Policy Research Report *Engendering Development*. Evidently the World Bank report takes off from the Beijing PfA. But twists and turns of context, language and focal points take place in the process from the 1995 PfA over the World Bank consultation draft 2000 to the World Bank final Report 2001.

In the Beijing PfA mild critique of World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) from the points of view of women is sporadically voiced, and it is pointed out that economic recession and political instability have often led to poverty, hitting more women than men; among the world's poor, women are an overwhelming majority. The document talks about the feminization of poverty and the fact that female headed households – numbers of which are increasing world wide – are often among the poorest of the poor. It is noted that "the boundaries of gender division of labour between productive and reproductive roles are gradually being crossed" (UN 1995: 15). Women entering into formerly male dominated areas, and men having started to accept greater responsibility for domestic work – but also that "changes in women's roles have been greater and much more rapid than changes in men's roles" (UN 1995: 15). Thus women are left with a greater burden of unpaid, invisible work. The connection between this situation and the feminization of poverty is obvious, even if it is not explicitly put forward in the text. It is however mentioned that women's contribution to development through unremunerated work is seriously underestimated (UN 1995: 70). Thus the Beijing PfA offers a series of possibilities for further action and investigation. The World Bank, however, picks up only on certain aspects, leaving others – such as the unpaid reproductive work – aside. Furthermore, and importantly, it re-contextualizes the whole discussion.

The World Bank consultation draft (May 2000) takes up the language of equality and rights, but the context is changed. Where in the Beijing PfA gender equality was understood as an outcome of women's struggles, including critique of prevailing economic trends, in the World Bank context gender equality is seen as an (automatic) result of development and economic growth. The implicit time line from a dark past replete with gender inequalities to a bright future of male/female equality is indicated already in the very first sentences of the document:

> Despite considerable progress in recent decades, gender inequalities are *still* pervasive (...) Gender gaps *remain* widespread in access to and control of resources, in economic participation, in power and political voice" (World Bank 2000: 1; emphasis added, SA).

The PfA talked about increasing gender gaps, with more women among the poor,

thus feminization of poverty; but in the World Bank optic this is not the case:

"Income growth and economic development promote gender equality in the long run" (World Bank 2001: 1).

No evidence is provided for this statement – but if you repeat it often enough, maybe in the end it will look like the truth?

In the final World Bank document, published in January 2001: *Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice*, the language on equality is even stronger. It is stated right from the beginning that "gender equality is a core development issue – a development objective in its own right. It strengthens countries ability to grow, to reduce poverty and to govern efficiently" (World Bank 2001, 1). Beyond being an *outcome* and a result of economic growth, gender equality is now also a *means* to the achievement of three top priorities of development at the given point in time: economic growth, poverty reduction and good governance.

The World Bank understanding of gender equality as an (automatic) *result of* – and at the same time also a *means to* – economic growth, places the World Bank notion of gender equality firmly on economic grounds. Through the report as well as in later World Bank strategies and publications (e.g. the four-year Gender Action Plan (GAP) *Gender Equality as Smart Economics*, launched 2007) it becomes abundantly clear that in World Bank contexts gender equality first and foremost stands for *economic* equality. To put it bluntly, World Bank gender equality is the neo-liberal imagined figure of 'economic man' extended to 'economic woman'. For the same reason women's unpaid subsistence production, as well as carer and motherwork,[4] remain invisible.

The World Bank itself, however, claims a broader understanding, defining 'gender equality' as equality under the law, equality of opportunity (including equality in access to productive resources) and equality of voice (World Bank 2001: 2). Accordingly, in the 2001 report a three part strategy is devised for reaching the goal of gender equality: Rights, Resources and Voice. Danida's 2004 strategy paper *Gender Equality in Danish Development Cooperation* has copied this three part strategy with minor changes. Also otherwise the Danida strategy paper has taken major lines of structure and argument from the World Bank's *Engendering Development* (2001), but in a slightly different phrasing, and adding a new emphasis here and there.

As for the implicit timeline of thinking, Danida follows the World Bank: "Despite indisputable progress, women and girls *still* suffer extensive, systematic gender discrimination in the vast majority of the countries of the world" (Danida 2004: 4; emphasis added, SA). Also, like in the World Bank documents, gender equality and economic growth go together: "Increased gender equality in terms of rights, resources and influence has a positive impact on the lives of women, men and children as well as on the country's possibilities of promoting economic growth, poverty reduction and democratic, good and effective governance" (Danida 2004, 6).

Gender Equality – a Danish brand?

In November 2007 the Danish government initiated an international campaign and Calls to Action for Millennium Development Goal no. 3 'to promote gender equality and empower women'. The agenda of the Danish MDG3 2015 Call to Action campaign is explicitly focused on women's economic empowerment. The major slogan of the campaign, also the title of one of the campaign brochures (February 2008) is *It Pays Off. Investing in Women and Gender Equality Makes Economic Sense. It Pays Off* can be seen as the

Danish edition of the World Bank GAP-slogan *Gender Equality as Smart Economics*. The text in the campaign brochure consists of different arguments convincing the reader regarding economic payoffs of gender equality. The brochure text is based on the assumption that gender inequality is the root cause of poverty in Africa:[5] "Inequalities between men and women continue to be a highly significant cause of Africa's poverty" it says (Danida 2008: 3). "Part of what makes women poor, in Africa as well as globally, is social inequality and the lack of opportunities they face purely because of their gender" (Danida 2008: 4). Thus, according to the brochure's reasoning, getting rid of gender inequality is *the* major challenge facing Africa. "Imagine if inequalities between women and men were gone!" the brochure continues. "If women's full potential was unlocked! If African women were given fair chances to earn money!" (Danida 2008: 2). A picture is painted of backward cultures and stupid men, who keep women down. This is never said explicitly, but a series of cartoons throughout the brochure confirms this impression. All cartoons depict lazy, ignorant, irresponsible men[6] – for instance a picture showing two women busily working in the field, one with a baby strapped to her back, while a group of men are heading for the bar in town.

In many ways it is a bizarre analysis. Even more bizarre, because the obvious target for development efforts, according to this analysis would be the men, the ones who seem to be major obstacles for the full and beneficial unlocking of women's potential. In spite of obstacles, however, the women of this brochure are active, enterprising women. The photographs in the brochure and on the cover show professional women (a judge, a chemist), a woman working in a factory, a woman reading the paper. In these pictures black/brown/yellow women are not 'othered'; there is rather an atmosphere of 'global sisterhood': these women are like ourselves.[7] This – for good and bad – is much in the Beijing spirit. Additional problems of the campaign lie in its economic focus – women should earn money, never mind the unpaid work, which women also do – and in its bizarre analysis, based on a definition of oppression which sees only male/female hierarchies of power (Mohanty 2003b: 111).

Another not unimportant aspect of the DK MDG3 campaign is the branding of Denmark as a gender equality pioneer. The title of a second campaign brochure (June 2008) is "On a Faster Track. Towards Economic Empowerment of Women". The language of this brochure is from the world of sports; the cover photo shows a Norwegian woman engineer at the North Pole, with the DK 2015 Call to Action flag; another photo shows a group of Nepali woman mountaineers at the peak of Mount Everest with the DK MDG3 campaign torch. The imagery from the world of sports – the coldest place, the highest peak – conveys a message of achievement. And who is the achiever? Implicitly the achiever is Denmark, having launched this fantastic campaign.

Co-option of Feminist Language for Imperialist Interventions

With the War on Terror, launched by the US in the wake of the attack on the World Trade Center twin towers in September 2001, the spin on women-in-development took a different turn. Or rather: a different aspect of development approaches to women/gender was now being re-vitalized. The conception of women as weak and oppressed, in need of help and protection, goes far back in European history. In Christianity the trope of 'Heroic men saving victimized women' is often invoked, for instance in the myth of St. George and the Dragon, with St. George valiantly fighting and eventually slaying the dragon, thus res-

cuing the Virgin/Princess, who has been captured and kept by the dragon/monster. Thus this 'oppressed and suffering woman in need of help and salvation' dates back to pre-Women's Movement days, when the image of womanhood was defined by society/men, and not by women themselves. Seen in this light the World Bank/Danida 'active enterprising woman' is the product of a successful women's movement, as also indicated by the links to the Beijing PfA.

Nevertheless, the image of the 'oppressed and suffering woman', with its deep roots in European culture, has currency even today. This image of womanhood has a long history in North/South relations, from colonialism onwards. It has been used by missionaries and colonial administrators to justify their enterprises in far away places of the world – rescuing and helping women has always been a noble cause in patriarchal Europe – and it has been taken over by feminists from the global North in moves of alleged solidarity with less fortunate sisters in the global South (Mohanty 2003a; 2003b).

Leila Ahmed, Egyptian gender scholar, living in the US, tells the story of British colonial policies in Egypt around the turn of the last century, and how the thoroughly patriarchal colonialists, with Lord Cromer, the British consul general at the helm, managed to "capture the language of feminism and redirect it, in the service of colonialism, toward Other men and the cultures of Other men" (Ahmed 1992: 151). Cromer considered Muslim culture inferior, an important indicator of this inferiority being Islam's treatment of women; it was his conviction – in line with the colonial discourse of the time – "that Islam was innately and immutably oppressive to women, that the veil and segregation epitomized that oppression, and that these customs were the fundamental reason for the general and comprehensive backwardness of Islamic societies" (Ahmed 1992: 152). Conversely, according to Cromer and many other European patriarchs of the time, the superiority of European (Christian) culture was evident in and by its elevation of women. "Victorian womanhood and mores with respect to women, along with other aspects of society at the colonial center, were regarded as the ideal and measure of civilization" (Ahmed 1992: 151). The colonial patriarchs and missionaries "all essentially insisted that Muslims had to give up their native religion, customs and dress (...) and for all of them the veil and customs regarding women were the prime matters requiring reform" (Ahmed 1992: 154). These ideas, proclaimed as feminism, "essentially functioned to morally justify the attack on native societies and to support the notion of the comprehensive superiority of Europe" (Ahmed 1992: 154).

Leila Ahmed's story from Egypt under British rule resonates in uncanny ways with United States legitimating its war in Afghanistan 2001 onwards. In a radio address to the nation on November 17, 2001, US First Lady Laura Bush positioned US soldiers as the gallant saviors of Afghan women, legitimizing the War on Terror as a quest to help the poor oppressed Afghan women: "Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment. (...) The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women" (Laura Bush, quoted in Abu-Lughod 2002: 784). Lila Abu-Lughod, Palestinian/US feminist scholar, tells about her discomfort being asked to appear in TV and radio programmes in the period after 9/11. Why this sudden interest in Afghan women? "Why were female symbols being mobilized in this 'War against Terrorism' in a way they were not in other conflicts?" she asks (Abu-Lughod 2002: 784).

Through her analysis Abu-Lughod shows how the War on Terror has revived a type of 'colonial feminism', popular and

widespread during the colonial period. "White men saving brown women from brown men" as this 'colonial feminism' has been aptly characterized by Indian/US feminist scholar Gayatri Spivak (1988). In the War on Terror this is still the case: American/European men saving Afghan women from Afghan men. This is not to say that the Taliban were/are not oppressive, but it is a question about who fights what in which contexts. However, according to Abu-Lughod "projects of saving other women depend on and reinforce a sense of superiority by Westerners, a form of arrogance that deserves to be challenged" (Abu-Lughod 2002: 789).

Abu-Lughod further questions the Western notion of feminism and secularism as always and necessarily interconnected. "Can there be a liberation [for women] that is Islamic?" she asks. "And beyond this, is liberation even a goal, for which all women or people strive? Are emancipation, equality and rights part of a universal language we must use?" (Abu-Lughod 2002: 788). These questions bring us back to the discussion of 'the fixed global language' of the Beijing PfA. Are the goals of this global language really shared by women everywhere? They may be goals for Western women – but women elsewhere might possibly have different desires? As Lila Abu-Lughod states:

> I have done fieldwork in Egypt over more than 20 years and I cannot think of a single woman I know, from the poorest rural to the most educated cosmopolitan, who has ever expressed envy of US women, women they tend to perceive as bereft of community, vulnerable to sexual violence and social anomie, driven by individual success rather than morality, or strangely disrespectful of God" (Abu-Lughod 2002: 788).

What does 'gender equality' actually mean? *Is* it a universal good?

The two seemingly contradictory images of women in development aid converge on several points. The active, enterprising woman (with reference to the Beijing PfA, however with some significant twists) and the poor and suffering woman to be rescued by valiant donors (male or female) – are both oppressed by *men* (the enterprising woman by lazy, stupid men; the poor and suffering woman by violent, dominant men) and regarding both types of women carework and motherwork is disregarded.

Furthermore, both images are rooted in the dubious World Bank claim that "income growth and economic development promote gender equality in the long run" (World Bank 2001: 1). This claim is however false; things just don't work like that. This is pointed out in the UNRISD report: *Gender Equality. Striving for Justice in an Unequal World* (2005). Gender equality has advanced in some sections of some societies while hierarchies and inequalities have been maintained or even increased in others, this report says. There is no automatic link between 'development' and 'gender equality'; on the contrary, and in line with some hints of the Beijing PfA, the evidence presented in the UNRISD report reveals gender *inequality* to be a persistent and integral feature of the modern world. Similarly the report shows that the World Bank neo-liberal model for economic growth is likely to *create* inequality and marginalization. Further in line with certain trends in the Beijing PfA – but more directly and to the point – the report characterizes 'free market economies' as "powerful drivers of inequality, social exclusion and discrimination against women, whose unpaid care work [holds] the social fabric together without recognition and reward" (UNRISD 2005: 8). Also the Human Development Report, which in 1995 focused on the situation of women, reports (slight-

ly) narrowing gender gaps in education and health, but increasing polarization in economic terms: "Of the estimated 1.3 billion people living in poverty, more than 70% are female (...) The number of rural women living in absolute poverty rose by nearly 50% over the past two decades. Increasingly, poverty has a woman's face" (UNDP 1995: 36), i.e. feminization of poverty. Thus gender equality is *not* an automatic result of economic growth; on the contrary, economic growth is likely to produce inequalities between men and women, as evidenced by the increasing numbers of women among the poor. The key issue here is carework and motherwork, work which does exist in the real world, but which does not count in economic models.

Carework and motherwork not being adequately accounted for is a limitation of mainstream feminist theory, and it is also a limitation of neo-liberal economics. Market mechanisms don't take account of carework etc. if it is unremunerated, which is generally the case. The market only counts money; it is blind to love and social relations, if these are not commercialized. Important as these types of work may be in daily life and for social existence in general: domestic work, care work, subsistence production, motherwork – in a context of market economies these types of work are invisible and unaccounted for. As long as men do not share these types of work, women and men are not on equal terms.

World Bank/development visions of gender equality thus are seriously limited; World Bank 'equality' is biased in favour of men, as also noted by Naila Kabeer (Bangladesh/UK) when she points to "the overriding emphasis on women's capacity to display rational economic behaviour without any equivalent emphasis on men's potential for displaying 'feminine' qualities of caring and nurturing. (…) The quest for formal equality with men on the basis of an imputed common rationality [has] posited a false identity of interests between women and men and denied the implications of their differing degrees of 'embodiment' in the processes of human survival, well-being and reproduction" (Kabeer 1994: 29).

Actually, not only World Bank visions are limited; also mainstream feminist notions of gender equality are insufficient. A concept of gender equality which fully takes account of care- and motherwork is yet to be invented. And at the same time: a concept of gender equality, which does *not* take account of types of work undertaken by a majority of women across the world – does not appear very convincing.

Thinking motherhood, parenthood and care

But how to think gender equality with unpaid care- and motherwork taken into consideration? Inspiration for this is possibly to be found in strands of African feminist thought. Ifi Amadiume takes motherhood – or rather the mother-child relationship – as a point of departure for thinking about women. This is not an essentialist position; motherhood is not necessarily biological motherhood. In many African contexts a lot of fostering takes place, children are handed over from those who have too many to those who have too few (cf Bledsoe 2002). As Oyèrónké Oyewùmí (Nigeria/US) points out, motherhood also may be disconnected from marriage, in as far as marriage is not a precondition for being a mother; married or not, a mother has a status as mother in her own right (Oyewùmí 2002: 5). The mother-child relationship is central and autonomous. Amadiume proposes to think social relations with a point of departure in the mother-child relationship, the *motherhood paradigm* as she calls it, purposefully replacing the otherwise omnipresent, but often implicit, patriarchal paradigm in social science (Amadiume 1997: 21).

Taking the mother-child – or parent-child – relationship as a point of departure

for thinking about gender equality, poses issues of equality on different ground. Take for instance the Danida exclamation quoted above: "If only African women were given fair chances to earn money!" and imagine it replaced by a different outcry: "If only European men were given fair chances to develop caring relationships with small children!" This sentence poses a somewhat different challenge for gender equality – a challenge which seems very much to the point in Scandinavian discussions of gender equality (one of the practical policies of relevance in this context being legally earmarked paid paternity leave for fathers) – and a challenge which might contribute to more inclusive and holistic notions of gender equality – notions which might, possibly, be more resistant to cooptation and application for reductionistic purposes by powerful economic forces.

Conclusion

As has been shown above, in spite of the influence of the Beijing PfA and with this a certain 'updating' of images of women in development discourse, a) 'colonial feminism' with its poor and suffering victimized women ready for salvation is still around, and b) the Beijing notion of strong and enterprising women fighting for gender equality and rights has been coopted by powerful donor forces, showcasing the strength but denying the struggle. As has further been shown, the unified, simplified 'fixed global language' of Gender-and-Development contributes to limited and distorted ideas regarding women's lives, partly because notions of gender equality in GAD discourse (and also in mainstream feminist thinking) are limited by disregarding the importance of care- and motherwork. Finally, aspects of post-colonial feminist thinking have been briefly introduced as possible inspiration for more inclusive and holistic notions of equality.

Notes

1. The paper is a follow-up to a previous gender/development stock-taking paper, written 10 years ago, cf. Arnfred 2001.
2. See for a critical discussion Adomako Ampofo and Arnfred (eds.) 2010.
3. Amadiume is here referring to the series of UN conferences in the early 1990s, from the Earth Summit in Rio 1992, to the Vienna Conference on Human Rights 1993 and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo 1994, to the Copenhagen Social Summit and the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, both 1995.
4. Motherwork is a concept launched by Patricia Hill Collins, African-American feminist scholar. "I use the term *motherwork*" Collins explains, "to soften the existing dichotomies in feminist theorizing about motherhood that posit rigid distinctions between private and public, family and work, the individual and the collective… " (Collins 1994: 47). The term motherwork connects what has been seen as biological, thus 'nature' (e.g. giving birth) to what is socially constructed (i.e. work).
5. The brochure also refers to countries in Asia and Latin America, but most examples are from Africa.
6. The lazy African men sitting under a tree while the women are working, is a die-hard colonial trope, cf. Ann Whitehead 2000.
7. Cf. Mohanty 2003a for a critique of the 'Global Sisterhood' idea.

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Summary

Women, men and gender equality in development aid – trajectories, contestations

The Beijing Platform for Action introduced notions of gender equality, which have been picked up by donors and development agents in increasingly popular images of strong enterprising women, however with an emphasis on economic entrepreneurship, disregarding aspects of care- and motherwork. At the same time 'colonial feminism' is still around, with its notions of women in the global South as oppressed under 'tradition' but rescued by development and 'modernity'. Such images have been re-invigorated in the global War on Terror, from 2001 onwards. The article investigates implications of these different but co-existing images of women in development contexts. It also discusses limitations of notions of gender equality, when used by donors and by women's organizations, and when discussed and critizised by post-colonial feminists.

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