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The Ripple Effect of the UN Decade for Women: Dutch Women and Development Policy Between 1975-1985

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Women:
Dutch Women and Development Policy Between
1975-1985**



Figure 1

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Supervised by Mirjam de Bruijn

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The process of writing this thesis has primarily been an inspiring one. Being able to speak with ten individuals who have dedicated parts, or most of their lives to the cause of improving the situation of women globally has not only been academically valuable, but also personally.

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Abstract

In this thesis I investigate the role of Dutch policy makers and researchers during the United Nations Decade for women from 1975-1985 with the following research question: *Why did Dutch development policy focused on women (WAD) experience progress and momentum during the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985)?* The theoretical framework consists of a history of ideas perspective combined with development cooperation theory. In order to track the development of Women and Development (WAD) paradigms over time I use a method combining archival research consisting of correspondence, policy papers, and official documents with interviews. I have interviewed ten individuals who all contributed significantly to the developments of the Decade. The stories of their lived experiences provide important interpretations of the Decade's proceedings. Moreover, they have allowed for a new perspective on the Decade that stands in contrast to the dominant historiographical narrative on the subject.

Using this framework I illustrate the significant progress achieved during the Decade and underline the contributions of Dutch women working in the WAD field. I explore the factors that led to their achieved momentum, including strong interpersonal relationships, their frontrunner role on the international stage, instances of support from individuals within the ministry, and individual finesse. Furthermore, I investigate the implementation of the policy. Specifically the reasons for the negative narrative that has been created around the outcomes of WAD policy. Through the used perspective I show that there are unexplored angles of measuring implementation that provide a more positive view of the developments of the Decade. I also explore the role and perspectives of African women, by which I highlight perception of policy and further explore the outcomes of the policy formulated during the Decade. The research underlines the significant role of individual agency and national and intercontinental women's networks in furthering WAD aims.

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List of Acronyms

AIV	Advisory Council on International Affairs
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CDA	Christian Democratic Appeal
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIWA	Coordinator for International Women's Affairs
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DCE	Directorate Coordination Emancipation Policy
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DGIS	Directorate General for International Cooperation
DIO	Directorate of International Organisations
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FLS	Forward Looking Strategies
GAD	Gender and Development
GOM	Gemeenschappelijk Overleg Medefinanciering
INSTRAW	Institute for Training and Research on the Advancement of Women
IWTC	International Women's Tribune Centre
IWY	International Women's Year
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
MCRSW	Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work
MDC	Minister of Development Cooperation

MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MSA	Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment
NAR	National Advisory Council for Development Cooperation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIEO	New International Economic Order
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNECA	UN Economic Commission for Africa
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VENO	Centre for Women and Development
VENA	Centre for Women and Autonomy
VVD	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy
WID	Women in Development
WAD	Women and Development

Introduction

On the 15th of May 2024, the new Dutch coalition announced that they would cut the budget for development cooperation (also referred to as development aid) with 2.4 billion euros. It is the biggest cut back on development cooperation in the history of the Netherlands. The phenomenon has received an increasing amount of criticism over the past decade, in academic as well as public domains, being accused of imposing Western values or even practicing neo-colonialism.¹ Over the past years, the Dutch government has struggled to create effective policy, to the point where the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) has dubbed the Dutch Africa-strategy to be in crisis.² In an article in Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* at the start of this year, the now demissionary minister for development cooperation emphasized her plans to change course: “We need a new strategy for this region. What we have done so far, has not worked. We have not listened.”³ This statement raises multiple questions: Who is we? The Dutch government and those in charge of development cooperation?, Listened to whom? Those receiving development aid?, And is she thus implying that those in charge of development cooperation have not, since the establishment of development cooperation practice, paid attention to the concerns and viewpoints of those from aid recipient countries? In this thesis I will present a case study within Dutch development cooperation history where those formulating policy did listen to those affected by the policy. It concerns development policy specifically focused on women, WAD policy, formulated between 1975-1985, and is orientated on its reception in Africa.

Shortly before granting independence to Indonesia in 1949 the Dutch incorporated foreign aid into its national policy as a way to be able to continue to exert influence

1. Stephen Ellis, “De crisis van de staat in Afrika,” *Internationale Spectator* 48, no. 10 (1994): 498–503; Hans Jansen, “Stop de ontwikkelingshulp,” *De Gids* 160, no. 7 (1997): 512–518, accessed March 22, 2024, https://bibliotheek.be/en/catalog/hans-jansen/stop-de-ontwikkelingshulp/magazine-article/library-marc-vlacc_1770735?branch=West-Vlaanderen/Oostende/Hoofdbibliotheek; Peter van Lieshout, Robert Went, and Monique Kremer, “Development Aid in a Changing Context,” in *Less Pretension, More Ambition*, Development Policy in Times of Globalization (Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 67–68, accessed June 13, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/j.ctt46mssf.4>; Peter Malcontent, “Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 2.0,” *Bestuurskunde* 31, no. 4 (2022): 14–15, accessed March 24, 2024, https://tijdschriften.boombestuurskunde.nl/tijdschrift/bk/2022/4/Bk_0927-3387_2022_031_004_002.

2. Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken, *Advies 25: Integratie van Gendergelijkheid. Een Zaak van Verantwoordelijkheid, Inzet en Kwaliteit*, Advice (Den Haag: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, December 14, 2001), 30.

3. Eva Oude Elferink, “‘Wat we tot nu toe hebben gedaan in de Sahel heeft niet gewerkt’,” *NRC*, January 11, 2024, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2024/01/11/wat-we-tot-nu-toe-hebben-gedaan-in-de-sahel-heeft-niet-gewerkt-a4186724>.

over the region.⁴ The Netherlands had been involved in international development processes, mostly through the UN, from 1949 onwards.⁵ The topic of WAD started to gain traction globally in the 1960s in the context of the second wave of the feminist movement and liberation struggles in African and Asian colonies, and scholars increasingly shed light on the role of women in the development process. Perhaps the most well known scholarly work on this topic comes from the hand of Ester Boserup, who wrote *Woman's Role in Economic Development* in 1970, which concluded that governments and international agencies fail to incorporate women in their activities. She identifies the cause of this being the assumptions that women were not involved in productive economic activities, which the research refuted.⁶ The increasing attention to this topic led to the UN establishing the International Women's Year (IWY) in 1975, with the International Women's Year World Conference in Mexico City as its main event. This led to the declaration of the UN Decade for Women, defined by three conferences: Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, and Nairobi in 1985. Mexico was meant to establish a strategy to improve the position of women globally, and set up guidelines for national policies aimed at improving the position of women, with the consequent conferences serving as measuring points to evaluate the process. During the Decade the discussion of women within development cooperation attracted attention globally to the role of women and their position in Global South societies.

In this thesis I investigate the role of Dutch policy makers during the Conferences and in WAD policy formation on the international stage, as well as investigate the formulated policy itself. Specifically, I will focus on the perception and role of Africa throughout the Decade. By including this angle, I hope to gain more insight into the reception of policy to create a holistic rather than one sided view of policy. It is the opinion of many scholars that Western development cooperation is an imposition of Western norms, by investigating African perceptions this can be tested. Of course, Dutch WAD policy is broader than Africa and was focused on many regions within the Global South. I have chosen Africa as the focus region for this research due to the rapid development of African women's movements throughout the Decade and their significant performance during the Nairobi Conference.

Central to the trajectory and development of WAD policy within the Netherlands was the line of women working on WAD at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). In 2000, some of these women, together with women working on WAD outside MFA in those days, formed a bookclub to stay in touch, and they continue to meet to this day.⁷ Though not all women active within the WAD field in the Netherlands are included in this bookclub, it symbolises a group of women that was able to make an agenda

4. Malcontent, "Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 2.0," 17–18; Peter van Lieshout, Robert Went, and Monique Kremer, "The Development Aid Split," in *Less Pretension, More Ambition*, Development Policy in Times of Globalization (Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 25–26, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/j.ctt46mssf.5>.

5. Joost Herman, "The Dutch Drive for Humanitarianism: Inner Origins and Development of the Gidsland Tradition and Its External Effects," Publisher: [Sage Publications, Ltd., Canadian International Council], *International Journal* 61, no. 4 (2006): 866, accessed March 24, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/40204220>.

6. Ester Boserup, *Woman's role in economic development* (New York, [N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1970]).

7. Susan Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author, March 22, 2024, Amsterdam; Jose van Hussen and Claudine Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author, April 3, 2024, Den Haag.

around women's issues at the right time. Throughout this thesis, it will be used as a metaphor for the close bonds between women that allowed them to further WAD aims. They were able to do so with a little help of some friends, and financial support of the MFA. This thesis will investigate the reason for their advances, and will be led by the following research question: *Why did Dutch development policy focused on women (WAD) experience progress and momentum during the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985)?*

The research question is both significant and timely for several reasons. The Decade proved to be a pivotal period for the field of international development as well as women's rights. Many countries, including the Netherlands, made substantial strides in adopting and implementing WAD policy. Understanding the factors that drove this progress in the Dutch context can provide valuable insights into the broader dynamics of policy evolution. Various lacuna in existing literature are addressed. While global women's movements and international policy frameworks have been studied, national implementation, particularly in the Netherlands, has received less attention. Ireen Dubel has initiated the first historiographic analysis of Dutch women concerned with WAD, showing the momentum the IWY and consequent Conferences gave to Dutch policy formation.⁸ A continuation of in-depth research on this topic is a critical addition to the historical record. Furthermore, I provide a significant contribution by not only analysing the formation and implementation of policy, but also perspectives on this process from those creating and affected by such policy.

The analysis of this Dutch case study also contributes to theoretical debates in development studies, offering empirical insights that contextualize various theories within a gendered perspective, enhancing understanding of the mutual influence of national policies and global development paradigms.

As outlined, gender-focused development policy continues to face challenges. Current WAD policy often overlooks the perspectives of women from the Global South. By presenting a case study where policymakers listened and successfully formulated policy based on what they learned, this study offers valuable lessons for future policymakers. Examining the successes and drivers of progress during the Decade, and understanding the factors behind the effective formulation and (perhaps not always effective) implementation of past WAD policy, can provide suggestions for addressing the needs of poor women in the Global South. Through the research I hope to uncover the historical processes that shaped Dutch WAD policy, contribute original knowledge to the field, and stimulate further research.

Theoretical Framework

For this study I have chosen for a focus on the influence of key actors, interpersonal relationships, and both internal and external factors. By highlighting the roles of influ-

8. Ireen Dubel, "1975-1985: a catalyst for Global South-oriented advocacy by Dutch feminists," Publisher: Routledge .eprint: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2023.2277488>, *Women's History Review* 0, no. 0 (2023): 1–20, accessed March 25, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2023.2277488>; Ireen Dubel, "1975 - 'Not just a year, but a lifetime for women' : How Dutch engagement with 'women and development' questions took off 1," *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* 24 (April 1, 2021): 5–23.

ential individuals and the interplay between domestic and international influences and movements, a holistic, nuanced perspective is achieved. The theoretical framework thus caters to these points of focus.

The theoretical framework combines the history of ideas and development studies theory to provide a multidimensional lens for analyzing WAD policy formulation and paradigm shifts in development studies. The history of ideas examines how cultural meanings persist and influence historical developments, outlining the evolution and significance of ideas, beliefs, and concepts.⁹ This perspective enables analysis of how WAD ideas emerged and evolved in the context of the Decade, highlighting paradigm shifts and the exchange of ideas across fields, times, and regions. Applying this lens to WAD policy involves examining the influence of feminist ideas, global gender equality discourses, and shifts in development studies on Dutch development policy, tracing the intellectual lineage of key concepts such as participation, integration, and autonomy, and understanding their translation into policy frameworks. It also includes the tracing of WAD ideas globally, whether concepts originated from the Global North or the Global South and how they have spread into other regions.

There are various theories within development studies that correlate with WAD developments. The modernisation theory emerged in the 1950s and argues that development is a linear process from traditional to modern societies. It underlines the role of economic growth and industrialisation. Dependency theory challenges this paradigm by arguing that underdevelopment in the Global South is a result of exploitation by developed countries. It has its roots in neo-Marxist theory. The Neoliberalist development paradigm poses that a free market will allow for an equitable allocation of resources. Lastly, the Human Development (HD) paradigms shows a move away from 'hard' economic political factors to the inclusion of social factors, such as quality of life.¹⁰ Contextualising the events of the Decade within these theories will help situate the case study within broader development and WAD discourse. The evolution of WAD policy can be seen as a response to the limitations of traditional development theories.

Integrating the approach of history of ideas with developments studies allows for a comprehensive analysis that considers both the intellectual origins and practical implementations of WAD policy. The interdisciplinary approach highlights the dynamic interplay between ideas and policy actions. Whereas the history of ideas provides a deeper understanding of the conceptual foundations of WAD policy, development studies offer insights into the structural and systemic factors that shape policy outcomes. Together, these perspectives will enable a nuanced analysis of the progress and momentum in Dutch WAD policy during the Decade. By implementing this approach I underline the significance of a shift in ideas and worldview on policy making.

9. Anne D'Alleva, "Chapter 3 Art's contexts," in *Methods & theories of art history* (London: King, 2005), 46–47.

10. Bubaker Shareia, "Theories of development," *International Journal of Language and Linguistics* 2, no. 1 (March 2015): 78–89.

Controversial Concepts

In this thesis, several terms will be used frequently that require definition and justification. Many terms in the field of development studies have been highly contested over the years, and it is important to discuss the shortcomings of some of these terms. None have been found to do justice to the subject matter, so the use of the terms below have been chosen to ensure clarity and simplicity.

Firstly, the term of development cooperation has been chosen over ‘development aid’ as the use of the word ‘aid’ perpetuates a binary opposition between the Global North and Global South, in which the latter is dependent on the former. Development cooperation aspires an more equal relationship. Although, as the thesis will show, this sentiment has not been, and still is not always shared by those involved.

As determined previously, in order to indicate policy relating to improving the status of women, the thesis will use the acronym WAD, referring to Women and Development. This should be seen as separate from the theoretical use of the acronym WAD, which indicates a certain paradigm in WAD formation and thinking.

Another problem faced in the writing is how to refer to parts of the world discussed in this thesis. I will refer to the Global North when relating to ‘industrialised’ countries in the West, mostly former colonising countries, and to the Global South when referring to poorer, ‘developing’ countries in the Southern hemisphere, of which most are former colonised countries. The use of these terms is not entirely satisfactory, as they generalise diverse regions and assume the financial and socio-economic status of a wide array of countries. Nevertheless, these terms are widely recognised within academic and policy circles and provide a useful framework for contextualising the different challenges and starting points of countries in these regions.

Furthermore, the concept of ‘development’ itself is also contested, and its meaning and interpretations have changed significantly over the years, politically as well as theoretically. When speaking of development, the meaning of ‘good change’ is implied, which is a relative concept. Any development agenda is influenced by personal and national values. finding a universal definition of development is thus always an ambivalent quest, as it depends on values and alternative conceptions of what is ‘good.’¹¹

Methodology

The scope of this thesis will include an analysis of the three Conference that took place between 1975-1985. Briefly, the Beijing Conference in 1995 will be discussed, as one of its goals was to reflect on the Decade. Dutch WAD developments between this time period will be examined and placed in the broader context of global developments of ideas and events. Therefore it is difficult to demarcate an exact time span for this thesis, as these developments are ongoing. The last chapter will also discuss the progressions of the Decade in light of current developments in the WAD field. Nevertheless, the Decade remains the main scope for analysis. Important to note is that each Conference

11. Andrew Sumner and Michael A. Tribe, *International Development Studies: Theories and Methods in Research and Practice* (London, UNITED KINGDOM: SAGE Publications, Limited, 2008), 17–20, accessed June 11, 2024, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/leidenuniv/detail.action?docID=456747>.

was accompanied by an NGO Forum, parallel to the Conference. Due to the limitations of this thesis however, the NGO fora will not be discussed as the focus will be solely on the Conferences.

The chosen approach is a combination of oral history and archival research of correspondence, policy papers, budgets, and official reports. I conducted the archival work at the international archives for the women's movement collections in the Atria archive in Amsterdam, which contains documentation of Dutch women's group *Vrouwenberaad*, records of the Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS), as well as the personal correspondence of Geertje Lycklama and Els Postel, both influential women in WAD policy.

These sources are invaluable for providing official data and insights into policy intentions. However, it is essential to critically assess these documents to account for potential biases and limitations. Most documents analysed were composed by the MFA in The Hague, with the purpose of outlining, justifying, or measuring WAD policy. These are influenced by the Minister of Development Cooperation (MDC) in charge at time of writing, and must thus be viewed in context of their political views and aims, on which their approach to development cooperation policy is based. Additionally, the language used in these documents can frame issues in ways that support specific policy choices. Through analysis of the terminology and framing, I aim to identify underlying biases and consider how they reflect the writers views on broader changes in development thinking.

Because of my choice for the history of ideas perspective, I opt for an oral history approach in the form of interviews. This approach has the ability to capture the full experiences of the individuals involved and can uncover information that may not be found in written records.¹² Interviews shed light on the atmosphere, relationships, and feelings experienced by the participants, which allows for a deeper understanding into the process of the becoming, spread, and exchange of ideas. Along with the use of formal policy papers and official government reports of the Conferences, this method allows for a broad picture of the Conferences, one that takes note of more than than just the policy that was formulated, but also takes into account *how* it came to be.

A similar focus on personal experiences has been used previously in researching the Decade and Conferences. An example of this is the book: *Developing Power: How Women Transformed International Development*, in which 27 women from 12 different countries involved in the developments of the Decade each wrote a chapter documenting their experiences. This book uncovered previously unknown angles of the events and how certain agreements were reached. Using an oral history approach enhances this effect, as interviewee's expressions, tone, and way of storytelling can be captured, which cannot be achieved through written text.¹³ Throughout the thesis excerpts from this book are used to compare, enhance, and contrast the Dutch women's experiences. Through the interviews I have gained insight into the participants' interpretations, which show that it was more than just hard facts and official agreements that led to the success of the policy, but that close ties and the feeling of achieving something together played a significant role.

12. Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, Google-Books-ID: 3OtjBAAAQBAJ (Oxford University Press, September 19, 2014), 1–28.

13. Ritchie, 1–28.

In selecting the interviewees, I aimed to get in touch with people who made important contributions to WAD development from various fields. They were found by way of internet search and through external contacts: I was brought into contact with Pronk, who kindly put me in touch with most other Dutch interviewees, initiating a snowball effect. Representatives from the MFA, the research side, other ministries involved with the Conferences, and non-Dutch voices have been chosen, leading to a diverse group of interviewees. All of them made significant contributions to WAD policy or research in the Netherlands or abroad, and most have attended at least one Conference. It has been attempted to speak to individuals who were active in the field throughout the Decade, so as to cover the entirety of the period.

I interviewed ten individuals (in chronological order): Jan Pronk, Joke Schrijvers, Thelma Awori, Susan Blankhart, Joke Swiebel, Saskia Wieringa, Teresa Fogelberg, Claudine Helleman, Jose van Hussen, and Ireen Dubel.¹⁴ Most interviewees held high positions at the Dutch government during the Decade. Pronk was MDC from 1973-1977 and again from 1989-1998. Others held WAD specific positions, such as *Coordinator for International Women's Affairs (CIWA)*. From the field of research some were active at Leiden University, the University of Amsterdam, or at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS). Thelma Awori is a Ugandan women's leader and retired Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations. She worked at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) for the latter part of the Decade.¹⁵

I interviewed two participants together, and one via Zoom. The other nine interviews were mostly conducted in the home of the interviewee, with the exception of Blankhart, who I met at a cafe in Amsterdam, as suggested by her. This setting allowed for a comfortable experience for the interviewees in which they could openly express themselves. While I had set up guiding questions in order to stay on topic, stories, experiences, and anecdotes of the Conferences often set the tone, which led to lively retellings and insights into their reflections. This method allowed me to construct the development of ideas and recreate the atmosphere of the Conferences.

In historical practice, it is acknowledged that interviews must be used with caution.¹⁶ It is encouraged to test evidence gained by oral history against other evidence, and it should be used in combination with other sources in order to validate the findings. This is because there are factors that can lead to selective memory.¹⁷ In the case of this research, the following factors are relevant: The start of the Decade is nearly fifty years ago. The women working in the field at the time are mostly retired (though not inactive). The passage of time may have influenced their memory of the Conferences. For example, many interviewees spoke with fondness and positivity about their experiences during the Decade, even the more painful ones. It can be the case that some view their memories through rose-coloured glasses. Second, ones retelling of an event is never unbiased or objective, as their own viewpoints and feelings influence their experience.

14. Their bios can be found in the Appendix.

15. "African Women Post Independence: Economic Empowerment, Peace, and Security," November 8, 2017, accessed June 21, 2024, <http://gess.msu.edu/Speaker/ThelmaAwori>.

16. Jeannette Kamp, *Writing history!: a companion for historians / Jeannette Kamp, Susan Legêne, Matthias van Rossum, Sebas Rümke.*, in collab. with Susan Legêne, Matthias van Rossum, and Tiele Rümke (Amsterdam: University Press, 2018), 80–81.

17. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 1–28.

Their opinions on current or prior issues may have had an effect on their retelling. I will thus cross reference the information in the interviews with other testimonies and archival research.¹⁸ For the purpose of this research, however, lived experiences, perspectives, and memories are valuable and vital, as they provide insight into ideas and interpretations that were important in the WAD field. The subtle subjective information gained through interviews is what allows for insights into the development of ideas.

My own positionality must also be acknowledged within this research process. As Bourke poses, research represents a shared space, shaped by participants as well as the researcher.¹⁹ The identity of the researcher can thus impact the research process. The findings of this study stem from my interpretations of the interviews and documents, making my perception and bias an influential factor. The translation of the interviews, as well as other official documents, from Dutch, were done by myself. Though I have aimed for the most literal translation, it is possible that my role has influenced the outcomes. Reflexivity, a self-conscious awareness of ones positionality, is an important exercise practiced throughout the research process. My original interest in the topic was influenced by the negative narrative that surrounds development cooperation. While my viewpoints have altered during this process, either viewpoint may influence my writing. The strive for objectivism is, as Bourke describes it, a “naïve quest.” Being mindful of this, I aim to strive for objectivity while being mindful of my inevitable subjectivities.²⁰

Another source that I used is the 2023 biographical book *Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt (1938-2014). Feministisch Stratege*, written by Johanneke Liemburg. Lycklama was a highly influential individual in the shaping of Dutch WAD policy as well as research. Unfortunately she passed away in 2014. Liemburg spoke to many of Lycklama’s colleagues and closely examined her personal correspondence. By doing so, a holistic picture of Lycklama and her work has been created, which naturally paints a picture of the progression of WAD policy development in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, it is not an academic study. Therefore, while the book provides useful information, it must also be critically examined and tested against other sources. Nevertheless, as with the interviews, personal accounts and relations are important to this research, as my aim is to examine the way ideas have developed and been exchanged.

An oral history approach in the form of these interviews is thus central to the research. Another motive for the use of oral history is the preservation of the individuals’ stories and experiences. Those who influenced the field during the 1970s and 1980s are growing older. Capturing their perspectives is important as to document and safeguard this often overlooked part of history and their contributions.

The figures presented throughout this thesis primarily derive from the interviewees’ personal archives. I asked if they had any pictures from the Decade, and they are used with their consent. Other figures are derived from the official UN archives, which are publicly accessible.

18. Ritchie, 1–28.

19. Brian Bourke, “Positionality: Reflecting on the Research Process,” *The Qualitative Report* 19, no. 33 (August 18, 2014): 19, <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol19/iss33/3>.

20. Bourke, 19.

Structure of Thesis

The thesis will be structured in the following way: Chapter one will provide a historical overview of the Decade, detailing the Conferences and their outcomes and investigating the following question: *How has WAD policy evolved during the Decade in light of the three UN Women's Conferences?* The Conferences will be placed in the context of shifting paradigms in development studies and WAD thinking, as well as global historical developments.

The second chapter delves deeper into analysing the factors that influenced Dutch WAD policy. It will more closely trace the spread and exchange of ideas and the role of the Dutch WAD women on the international stage. I have identified four factors of influence that will be discussed in separate sections: interpersonal relationships, the Dutch WAD women's role on the international stage, internal factors, and geopolitical factors. Together they will answer the question: *What factors have influenced the progression of Dutch WAD policy between 1975-1985?*

In chapter three I examine the outcomes of these policies, focusing specifically on the perspectives of African women during the Decade and factors at play in policy execution and evaluation. It will be led by the following question: *What are the effects of the dominant way of implementing and evaluating WAD policy?* Moreover, the chapter will reflect on the current negative narrative surrounding development cooperation.

By examining these significant aspects of WAD policy developments, formulation, and implementation, I will provide a holistic, nuanced answer to the question *Why did Dutch development policy focused on women (WAD) experience progress and momentum during the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985)?*

Chapter 1

A Decade of Change?

“The Decade was really important in the sense that it catalysed the development of governments’ WAD policy.”

- Ireen Dubel

In order to find out *why* WAD policy developed in the way that it did, it must first be discussed *what* happened exactly. Scholars tend to differ in their descriptions of the three UN International Women’s Conferences (Conferences) and their interpretations of the development of policy. I aim to shed light on these developments. This chapter is thus guided by the following research question: *How has WAD policy evolved during the Decade in light of the three UN Women’s Conferences?* The question will be answered by providing an overview of the Conferences: Mexico, 1975, Copenhagen, 1980, Nairobi 1985. The chapter will also briefly set out the proceedings of the Beijing Conference, 1995, which served as a reflective Conference on the Decade. The chapter will examine the Conferences in light of their outcomes and the developments and progressions around the Conferences within the Netherlands.

Figure 1.1 shows a timeline of the developments in WAD throughout, prior to, and directly following the Decade. Major global events have been added at the bottom in order to contextualise these developments within broader global processes. Major achievements in the WAD policy sphere have been added below with a pink outline as indication. The paradigms in WAD thinking are shown in blue, yellow, green, and purple. The grey tones indicate paradigm shifts within development studies. Naturally, the transition from one paradigm to another cannot be pinpointed to a date, or even a year, and scholars often differ in their indications. The changeovers are thus indicated around the approximate time of the shifts. The developments throughout the Decade as described in this chapter will shed more light on the concepts shown in the timeline and what they signify.

1.1 Mexico

The 1970s saw a growing amount of research into development policy, including that specifically focused on women. Most famously Boserup’s 1970 study, which was the first to delineate

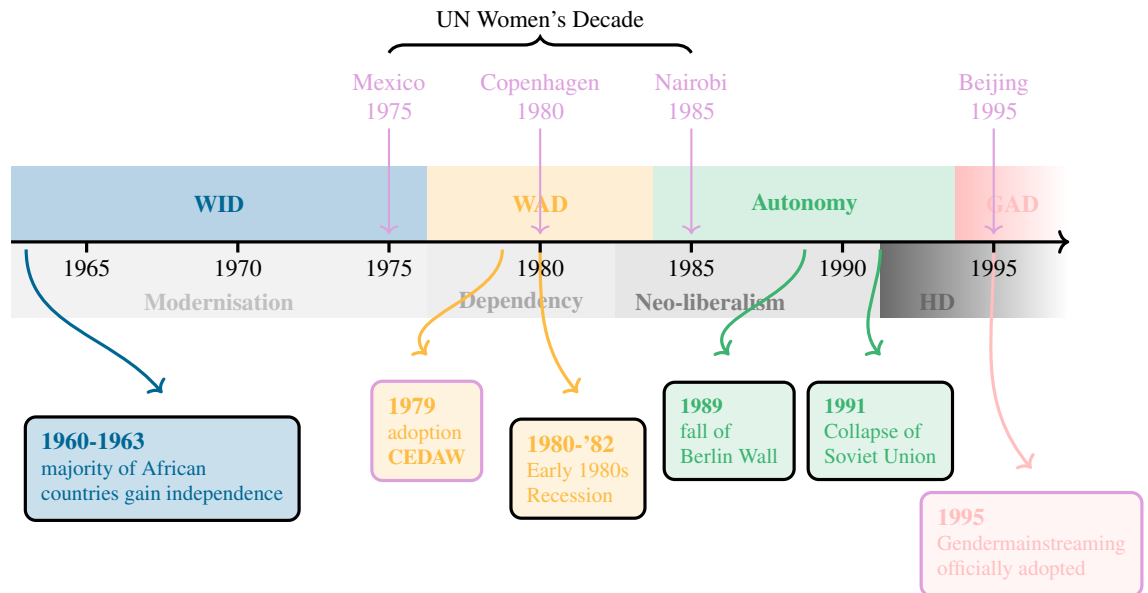


Figure 1.1: Timeline of WAD policy and historical developments

the sexual division of labour systematically on a global level.¹ Boserup's research ushered in the Women in Development (WID) paradigm in WAD thinking, which calls for the inclusion of women in development programs and policies.² It assumes that a focus on women in specific programs would automatically improve their lives.³ Many assumptions held in the WID paradigm are rooted in modernisation theory, which dominated mainstream thinking on international development from the 1950s into the 1970s. The UN took note of the growing interest in WAD, and thus the idea for the IWY 1975 was born, with the first conference in Mexico City taking place from the 19th of June until the 2nd of July.⁴

Modernisation theory poses that development be geared toward capital accumulation. Its aims were rooted in Western values, such as the primary position of higher education and the condemnation of 'traditional' practices.⁵ Over time development would aid in replacing these practises with mass media, developed political institutions, increased mobility, and other facets considered modern. It thus argues for social and cultural reforms modeled on the developed societies of the West.⁶ In modernisation theory, women were rarely considered a separate unit of

1. Eva M. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD: Trends in Research and Practice," Publisher: College of Business, Tennessee State University, *The Journal of Developing Areas* 24, no. 4 (1990): 490, accessed June 13, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/4191904>.

2. Elizabeth Ransom and Carmen Bain, "Gendering Agricultural Aid: An Analysis of Whether International Development Assistance Targets Women and Gender," Publisher: Sage Publications, Inc. *Gender and Society* 25, no. 1 (2011): 51, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/25789921>.

3. Gina Koczberski, "Women in Development: A Critical Analysis," Publisher: [Taylor & Francis, Ltd., *Third World Quarterly*] 19, no. 3 (1998): 395, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/3993130>.

4. Ransom and Bain, "Gendering Agricultural Aid," 51–52.

5. Koczberski, "Women in Development," 398.

6. Richard Zidana and Alex Nkosi, "Theories of Development and their Applicability to Underdevel-

analysis. The assumption was that the norm of the male experience was generalisable to women and that modernisation would benefit the whole of society.⁷

It was against this theoretical background that the first World Women's Conference was to be held. That WAD policy was not yet valued was evident in the resources allocated to the Conference. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a functional committee of the UN established in 1947, had six months and 350,000 dollars to organise and prepare for the Conference. This was significantly less time and budget than other global conferences were given.⁸ Ideologically, the Conference also faced challenges. Although WID scholars had criticised certain facets of modernisation theory, the paradigm was still rooted in a Western-dominant development framework, in which Western women were in control of the development of the Global South and they held the moral high ground.⁹

WID criticism of modernisation theory lies in the accusation that the theory does not recognise women's distinct experience of development. Scholars had pointed out that the relative position of women had not improved over the past two decades, even though development cooperation had been actively implemented into policy since 1949. WID thus calls for the *integration* of women into established development initiatives, hereby upkeeping the framework that the road to development is the road to a more Western, European society.¹⁰ WID does not question the root of women's subordinate position, nor consider class, race, and culture which can influence women's differing positions.¹¹ By sustaining the superior image of the West, and by extension of Western women, the 'white saviour' paradigm that was prominent during the colonial period is furthered, and the binary opposition between skilled women from the West and passive, oppressed, ignorant women from the Global South is perpetuated.¹²

In total 8000 people attended the Mexico Conference, from 133 nations.¹³ Most delegations from non-Western regions did not feel represented by the dominant WID viewpoints, leading to global disagreements on the basic points for in the preliminary draft for the Plan of Action (PoA) for International Women's Year. Eventually, it was decided to have a demarcation of three themes, representing the interests of various groups: Equality, Peace, and Development, representing First, Second, and Third World women.¹⁴ The Mexico PoA sets out the global strategy for the upcoming Decade, which symbolised the pre-eminence of the WID paradigm: the integration and full participation of women in development.¹⁵ The document sets out a minimum of objectives to be achieved by the midpoint of the Decade: 1980, to be reviewed at a mid-decade conference. Included in the objectives are access to education, health services, and voting, and development is a central focus in the document and during the Conference. How these objectives are to be achieved was to be decided on a national level, as it was acknowledged that the situation

oped World: Different Propositions, Same Dilemma?," *African Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3 (February 1, 2023): 21.

7. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD," 491.

8. Judith P. Zinsser, "From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi: The United Nations Decade for Women, 1975-1985," Publisher: University of Hawai'i Press, *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (2002): 146-147, accessed March 24, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/20078945>.

9. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD," 490.

10. Koczberski, "Women in Development," 398.

11. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD," 491-492.

12. Koczberski, "Women in Development," 401.

13. Patrick Kilby, "From Women in Development to Gender Justice?," in *NGOs and Political Change, A History of the Australian Council for International Development* (ANU Press, 2015), 73, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/j.ctt183q3dm.11>; Ogechi Adeola, *Empowering African Women for Sustainable Development: Toward Achieving the United Nations' 2030 Goals*, Google-Books-ID: XNQPEAAAQBAJ (Springer Nature, December 17, 2020), 3.

14. Zinsser, "From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi," 146-147.

15. Kilby, "From Women in Development to Gender Justice?," 73.

of women varies in different society.¹⁶

In the Netherlands, preparation for the Conference was marked by discord on which ministry would be in charge of the Conference. Both the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (MCRSW) and the MFA were vying for the job. Pronk, the idealistic, ambitious, young MDC had ushered in a new, progressive vision on development cooperation that stood in stark contrast against the modernisation paradigm:¹⁷ “I admit that development cooperation in the vast majority of international politics remains a function of imperialistic acts. [...] Nevertheless, I state that this is not the case for current Dutch policy and that it is also not inherent to development cooperation that it is a function of such politics.”¹⁸

In line with this vision, Pronk was of the opinion that Mexico should be about women from the Global South, which would assign the responsibility of the Conference to him. MCRSW, led by Harry van Doorn, wanted to be in charge because they were responsible for women’s emancipation. In the end, Pronk and van Doorn shared the responsibility of preparing for the conference, with Pronk being the official delegation leader.¹⁹ The delegation consisted of twenty people, representing the MFA, the MCRSW, various Dutch women’s groups, and representatives from the Dutch colonies.²⁰ In order to be well prepared for the Conference, Pronk asked a group of anthropologists at Leiden University, led by Els Postel and Joke Schrijvers, to conduct research into the topic of the position of women in the Global South, which resulted in the advice *Vrouwen op Weg*. Postel and Schrijvers were also present at the Conference as special advisors.

At the Conference a wide array of topics came to the fore; literacy, nutrition and population, household and marriage, peace and human rights. However, there was an absence of more controversial issues, such as violence and sexuality.²¹ Just as the Netherlands went into the conference with little previous knowledge on the position of women globally and few women in function at the government with not much diplomatic experience, so did many other countries. This is the reason many scholars view the Conference as an unsteady beginning where women delegates were learning the ropes of the trade, cooperation was not as smooth, and differences between women from different parts of the world were evident.²² One issue in which the differences between delegates from different regions was visible was that of the New International Economic Order (NIEO). Scholars from the Global South had challenged modernisation theory and argued that the international economic system furthered a global structure of inequality. They, united in the G77, thus lobbied for a new order.²³ Pronk was a strong supporter of the NIEO, despite criticism and resistance from other Dutch politicians. In the end, the NIEO was never realised.²⁴

Following Mexico, governments were to create national machinery, special mechanisms to help further the goals set out at the Conference, to strengthen existing organisations and serve women.²⁵ Governments started setting up offices, bureaus, and women’s programs. For exam-

16. Zinsser, “From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi,” 148.

17. Malcontent, “Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 2.0,” 17.

18. Paulus Richardus Josef Hoebink, “De ‘omwenteling’ onder Pronk 1973-1977,” in *Geven is nemen: de Nederlandse ontwikkelingshulp aan Tanzania en Sri Lanka* (Nijmegen: Stichting Derde Wereld Publikaties, 1988), 57–61, accessed June 14, 2024, https://repository.uibn.ru.nl/bitstream/handle/2066/113164/mmubn000001_515929727.pdf.

19. Dubel, “1975-1985.”

20. Dubel, “1975 - ‘Not just a year, but a lifetime for women’,” 13–14.

21. Peggy Antrobus, “A Decade for Women: UN conferences, 1975-85,” in *The Global Women’s Movement* (United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2004), 55.

22. Zinsser, “From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi,” 146–147.

23. Antrobus, “A Decade for Women,” 43.

24. Malcontent, “Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 2.0,” 15.

25. Maria Nzomo, “The Impact of the Women’s Decade on Policies, Programs and Empowerment of Women in Kenya,” Publisher: Cambridge University Press, *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 17, no. 2 (1989):

ple, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) set up a WID office and Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) appointed two junior WAD officers to advise the aid program.²⁶ In the Netherlands, Pronk created the senior position of CIWA and dedicated a large sum of money to continue research on the position of women worldwide.²⁷ Moreover, an International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) was established in New York City, which became an important mechanism for the formation of global women's network.²⁸ The Conference was also the first time governments agreed on a global public policy to end discrimination against women worldwide.²⁹

WID criticism of modernisation theory in the late 1960s and early 1970s had inspired a growing amount of critique coming from feminist scholars, as well as other fields, leading to a transition toward a new way of development thinking.

1.2 Copenhagen

The Copenhagen Conference between the 14th and the 30th of July 1980 signified the mid-decade review, and resulted in the Copenhagen Programme of Action (PoA).³⁰ It was originally supposed to take place in Iran, but was moved to Copenhagen in light of the 1979 Iranian revolution.³¹ The transition from modernisation theory to the newly formulated dependency theory was in full swing. Rooted in neo-Marxist theory and Keynesian liberal economic thinking, dependency theory views the world as divided into developing countries and the 'core', with a strong focus on the relationship of the first to the latter.³² Copenhagen thus took place within an era of increasing critical theory and shifting paradigms. Moreover, the state of the international system was tumultuous, with the Cold War pitting world regions against each other and an upcoming recession causing tension. Many scholars view Copenhagen as symbolising this hostility, underlining continuous tensions between women from different parts of the world.³³

Feminist scholars had built upon the views of the WID paradigm, as well as the information they had gathered about the position of women globally in preparation for and during Mexico, and started to formulate a new way of thinking. This new neo-Marxist paradigm acknowledges that the work women do inside and outside the household is central to the maintenance of societies. It considers the relationship between women and development processes rather than solely focusing on strategies for integration, focusing on Woman *and* Development (WAD). Although this was a step further from WID thinking, WAD thinking also has little regard for class relations

9, accessed March 24, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/1167039>; Antrobus, "A Decade for Women."

26. Kilby, "From Women in Development to Gender Justice?," 77.

27. Dubel, "1975 - 'Not just a year, but a lifetime for women'"; Kamerstukken II, *Nota naar aanleiding van het verslag over het onderdeel ontwikkelingsamenwerking, 1977-1978*, 14800 V, no. 19 (Den Haag: Departement van Buitenlandse Zaken), 18–19.

28. Sarah Lynn Jones, "Networking local-global advocacy: A rhetorical historiography of the international women's tribune centre (1972-1986)," ISBN: 9781321407891 (PhD diss., The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 2014), 1–5, accessed June 21, 2024, <https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/docview/1642488605/abstract/FA8338F3A0C84069PQ/1>.

29. Mary K. Meyer and Elisabeth Prügl, *Gender Politics in Global Governance*, Google-Books-ID: EMqz7LLP3VwC (Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 179–180.

30. Zinsser, "From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi," 151–152.

31. Jane S. Jaquette, "Crossing the Line: From Academia to the WID Office at USAID," in *Developing power: how women transformed international development*, 1st Feminist Press ed, OCLC: 56214177 (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2004), 197, accessed May 27, 2024, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0421/2004019268.html>.

32. Zidana and Nkosi, "Theories of Development and their Applicability to Underdeveloped World," 23.

33. Kilby, "From Women in Development to Gender Justice?," 79.

or race. The paradigm points to underrepresentation of women in economic, political, and social structures as the primary problem of women's position, to be solved by intervention strategies.³⁴

This structuralist view is echoed by dependency theorists, who came to represent the dominant way of thinking of development at the time. Within this paradigm it is believed that world regions, dubbed as 'peripheries,' are static in their position on the international stage due to the international economic order they are a part of. In this order, developing countries supply cheap raw materials to the core to produce finished products to be sold to the periphery for large amounts of money, sustaining their dependent relationship.³⁵ This paradigm, as modernisation theory, gave little attention to the position of women, which continued to face criticism from WAD scholars.³⁶

At Copenhagen, it was not the CSW that was in charge, but a special Preparatory Committee had been established to be in charge of the drafting of the document and organisation of the Conference. The Secretary General was Lucille Mair of Jamaica.³⁷ This time 145 nations attended, an increase since Mexico.³⁸ The subthemes on the agenda were education, employment, and health. WAD scholars had exposed the gender ideology underlying the global economic system, which led to the root cause of women's inequality being identified as the sexual division of labour based on women's childbearing function. Another change brought about at Copenhagen was the acknowledgement of the important role of women's organisations in creating political will. This stands in contrast with Mexico's strong focus on governments' role in furthering WAD aims.³⁹

Within the Dutch delegation there was also a shift in power and responsibility for the Conference. There was now an emancipation department, which fell under MCRSW. The delegation was led by Jeltien Kraayeveld-Wouters, the Deputy Minister of Women's Emancipation (there was no minister yet), and Jan de Koning, then MDC.⁴⁰

Copenhagen is seen by many scholars as the most 'conflictive' Conference due to the supposed interference of other global and nationalist issues overshadowing the actual purpose of the Conference, being women's issues.⁴¹ One main issue that was discussed was the clause of *Zionism is racism*. The G77 aimed to insert the statement into the PoA, and they received support from the Eastern European delegations. Issues such as Apartheid and the Cold War were also at the forefront of discussions.⁴² However, despite the prominence of global issues, there are progressions compared to Mexico. There was a strong focus on documentation and collecting data on the position of women, during and prior to the Conference. It was presumed that by creating *evidence*, that women's conditions could change.⁴³ Due to this focus, delegations came to the Conference with a better, statistically supported view of the position of women globally and nationally. Not only was the Conference more 'professional' in the sense that they had data to back up their claims and aims, the women delegates had also increased their networking skills. Research by the UN had reached the following conclusion: "Women [...] carry out two-thirds of

34. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD," 493.

35. Zidana and Nkosi, "Theories of Development and their Applicability to Underdeveloped World," 23.

36. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD," 492–493.

37. Antrobus, "A Decade for Women," 49.

38. Adeola, *Empowering African Women for Sustainable Development*, 3.

39. Antrobus, "A Decade for Women," 51.

40. Joke Swiebel, Semi-structured interview with author, March 26, 2024, Amsterdam.

41. Jaquette, "Crossing the Line: From Academia to the WID Office at USAID," 198.

42. Arvonne S. Fraser, "Seizing Opportunities: USAID, WID, and CEDAW," in *Developing power: how women transformed international development*, 1st Feminist Press ed, OCLC: 56214177 (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2004), 165–167, accessed May 27, 2024, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0421/2004019268.html>; Meyer and Prügl, *Gender Politics in Global Governance*, 180.

43. Zinsser, "From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi," 157.

the world's work and earn one tenth of the world's income."⁴⁴ This led to the acknowledgement of the cause of women's position as the sexual division of labour based on women's childbearing function.

In the end, the Copenhagen PoA was not adopted by consensus, mainly because of tension around the *Zionism is Racism* clause. The Netherlands joined other Western countries in voting against because of this matter. Media globally have written off the conference as being too 'political,' and the Conference is not generally considered a success due to the controversy.⁴⁵ This is also true for the Netherlands. A Dutch article by NRC Handelsblad stated: "Compared to the Mexico conference - five years ago - Copenhagen signifies a step forward, but in the direction of sublimation."⁴⁶

Although the Plan was not adopted, the Conference did exhibit important statements. For example, the acknowledgement of the need to ease the workload of women lead to an increase in women's networks and development activities.⁴⁷ Additionally, at the opening ceremony over fifty countries signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), sending the important message that international women's issues could not be ignored.⁴⁸

Following Copenhagen, during the 1980s, the WAD paradigm was increasingly questioned. Globally, things were changing: the tensions of the Cold War were diffusing and neoliberalism was on the rise. Dependency theory made way for a strategy of development cooperation defined by neoliberalism. Socialist feminism became increasingly popular in the Global South, and women's movements in the Global South continued to increase rapidly, bringing forward theories of postcolonial feminism. Both these fields found that the universalist WAD approach simplified women's position globally and overlooked unequal power relations between men and women. They argued that the approach targeted the symptoms of women's subordinate position, but failed to acknowledge the larger structure of capitalism and global inequality and power relations that was the cause of this inequality.⁴⁹

1.3 Nairobi

The 1985 Nairobi Conference represented the end of the Decade and resulted in the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (FLS). Socialist and postcolonial feminism had laid the groundwork for a new paradigm in WAD thinking: Gender and Development (GAD) in the 1980s, where power relations between men and women are increasingly questioned. Though the paradigm had not been officially adopted yet, academic publications slowly started incorporating terms such as 'gender roles in development' 'gender planning', and 'gender interests of women.'⁵⁰ The

44. Antrobus, "A Decade for Women," 49.

45. Leticia Ramos Shahani, "The UN, Women, and Development: The World Conferences on Women," in *Developing Power: How Women Transformed International Development*, Google-Books-ID: 3Q4LrYLajJgC (Feminist Press at CUNY, 2004), 32; Antrobus, "A Decade for Women," 51.

46. Jacqueline de Savornin Lohman, "Opinie — Kopenhagen: doel dreigt uit het feminisme te verdwijnen," *NRC*, July 28, 1980, accessed May 27, 2024, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/1980/07/28/kopenhagen-ziel-dreigt-uit-het-feminisme-te-verdwijnen-kb.000027446-a3730454>.

47. Anne S. Walker, "The International Women's Tribune Centre," in *Developing power: how women transformed international development*, 1st Feminist Press ed, OCLC: 56214177 (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2004), 94, accessed May 27, 2024, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0421/2004019268.html>.

48. Fraser, "Seizing Opportunities: USAID, WID, and CEDAW," 165–171.

49. Ransom and Bain, "Gendering Agricultural Aid," 52.

50. Ina Keuper, "Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en gender," *Culturele Antropologie/SNWS Publicaties*, January 1, 2005, 2.

paradigm links relations of production to relations of reproduction, taking into account all aspects of women's lives instead of painting a singular picture as with the previous two paradigms.⁵¹ Globally, neoliberalism was prominent due to the recession of the early 1980s. This was exemplified by Margaret Thatcher's government taking office in 1979 in the UK and Ronald Reagan's government in the US in 1981.⁵²

In line with these developments, development thinking in the 1980s advocated for free market policies, deregulation, privatisation, and reduction of state intervention in the economy. By liberalising the economy, the economy would be opened to more competition and an efficient allocation of resources would be achieved. The state would still be involved in the provision of public goods and services such as education, health, and infrastructure.⁵³

The GAD paradigm also aligns with certain neoliberal concepts such as individualism, stressing the responsibility of women, encouraging them to organise themselves for a more effective political voice. The paradigm acknowledged divisions between women caused by class and race, showing how the ideology of patriarchy operates across classes to oppress women.⁵⁴ Moreover, social relations of gender were examined, and the roles assigned to both men and women questioned.

It was the CSW that was once again in charge at Nairobi with Letitia Shahani as Secretary General, and it was the largest gathering of women to date, with 13.5000 attending from 157 nations.⁵⁵ The FLS lay down around 400 goals to be achieved by the next millennium, 2000. It reiterates the themes of Equality, Development, and Peace. The position of women as central to the realisation of broader global goals was fully acknowledged: "The advancement of women is without doubt a pre-condition for the establishment of a humane and progressive society."⁵⁶ In contrast to the previous two Conferences, development came second, and the agency and autonomy of women first. Women were to be active contributors to the development process and self-reliance was a priority.⁵⁷

Autonomy was a keyword at Nairobi, the FLS define it as enabling "women to define and defend their own interests and needs."⁵⁸ The strategy of autonomy in policy underlines the importance of the use of power by and for women, to decide for themselves, and to prevent others from having power over them.⁵⁹ This is in line with the increase in individualism that was a key aspect of neoliberalist thinking.⁶⁰ As with the other Conferences, there is a strong focus on policy on a national level and implementing national machinery to improve the position of

51. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD," 493–494; Ransom and Bain, "Gendering Agricultural Aid," 53–55.

52. Ian Cummins, "4: Neoliberalism," in *Social Work and Society Political and Ideological Perspectives*, Section: Social Work and Society (November 27, 2019), 470–492, accessed June 27, 2024, <https://bristoluniiversitypressdigital.com/display/book/9781447344735/ch004.xml>.

53. Zidana and Nkosi, "Theories of Development and their Applicability to Underdeveloped World," 23–24.

54. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD," 494–495.

55. Adeola, *Empowering African Women for Sustainable Development*, 3; Antrobus, "A Decade for Women," 57; Nilüfer Çağatay, Caren Grown, and Aida Santiago, "The Nairobi Women's Conference: Toward a Global Feminism?," Publisher: Feminist Studies, Inc. *Feminist Studies* 12, no. 2 (1986): 401, accessed March 24, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/3177975>.

56. United Nations, *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (New York, 1986), paragraph 39, accessed June 27, 2024, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/confer/nfls/Nairobi1985report.txt>.

57. Zinsser, "From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi," 160; Kilby, "From Women in Development to Gender Justice?," 78.

58. United Nations, *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985*, paragraph 331.

59. Keuper, "Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en gender," 11.

60. Zidana and Nkosi, "Theories of Development and their Applicability to Underdeveloped World," 23–24.

women. The FLS solidify this by stating: “laws guaranteeing equality for women in all spheres of life must by then [2000] be fully and comprehensively implemented to ensure a truly equitable socio-economic framework.”⁶¹

What sets this Conference apart from the previous Conferences is the large presence and leadership by women from the Global South. They represented sixty percent of attendants.⁶² It was also the first large conference in Africa and African women took charge on many fronts.⁶³ The location of the Conference allowed them to present their abilities, and allowed women from the West to observe the position of women in an African country, furthering understanding and mutual respect.⁶⁴

In the Netherlands, the paradigm shift in WAD thinking was also visible in policy documents. Increasingly terms such as ‘genderanalysis,’ ‘genderperspective,’ and ‘genderpolicy’ were used.⁶⁵ The Dutch delegation leader was Deputy Minister of Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (MSA), and thus responsible for emancipation affairs, Annelien Kappeyne van de Coppello. Eegje Schoo was MDC.⁶⁶

The FLS were adopted by consensus. Issues previously shied away from were addressed, such as abuse of women and children, pornography, Apartheid, and the situation of Palestinian women.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, some controversial issues were still left undiscussed, such as equal pay for work of equal value, and the right for married women to own property.⁶⁸ Nairobi laid the groundwork for the eventual adoption of the GAD framework, which represented women globally.

1.4 Beijing

Although the documents resulting from the Conferences show progress in the formulation of WAD policy, research showed that come Nairobi, which signified the end of the Decade, the position of women in the world had not improved, and even deteriorated.⁶⁹ This is one of the reasons for the initiative for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, with a focus on reflection on the Decade.⁷⁰ Although the Conference is outside the time-span and scope of analysis for this thesis, it is relevant to mention the purpose, events, and achievements of the Beijing Conference in order to gain a decent understanding of the Decade.

The 1990s saw a decline of the focus on ‘hard’ development factors such as economic and political elements, and an increase in the incorporation of ‘softer’ elements. Recognising the failure of the neo-liberalist strategy, it acknowledges that economic growth is a means to an end, but not an end in itself. This holistic Human Development (HD) approach values quality of life over economic factors and has a strong focus on citizen participation and democracy.⁷¹ The

61. United Nations, *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985*, Paragraph 35 8a/.

62. Aili Tripp, “The Evolution of Transnational Feminisms: Consensus, Conflict and New Dynamics,” in *Global Feminism* (New York University Press, January 2006), 62.

63. Ireen Dubel, Semi-structured interview with author, April 4, 2024, Amsterdam.

64. Antrobus, “A Decade for Women,” 53–56.

65. Keuper, “Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en gender,” 2.

66. Swiebel, Semi-structured interview with author.

67. Antrobus, “A Decade for Women,” 50–51.

68. Lois A. West, “The United Nations Women’s Conferences and Feminist Politics,” in *Gender Politics in Global Governance*, Google-Books-ID: EMqz7LLP3VwC (Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 182.

69. Zinsser, “From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi,” 142–143.

70. Zinsser, 168.

71. Zidana and Nkosi, “Theories of Development and their Applicability to Underdeveloped World,” 24–25.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP) started calculating a *human development index* in 1990, which focuses on basic education, life expectancy, and income per head. This shows a shift in paradigm, as development was previously only measured in GDP.⁷²

The strategy of gendermainstreaming was adopted as official strategy.⁷³ Instead of a focus on integrating women into already existing, Western development processes, the strategy was to give issues of women's and gender marginalisation a central position in government policy and practice, diffusing the topic of gender throughout development bureaucracies and governments to promote gender equality.⁷⁴

The Beijing Conference adopted the Platform for Action (PFA), which consisted of ambitious goals for the next millennium. Women attending Beijing describe a decline in global tensions, made possible by the end of the Cold War, the abolishing of Apartheid, and increased hope for peace in the Israel Palestine conflict.⁷⁵ New strategies and concepts were introduced, such as the popularisation of the terms gender and empowerment. GAD was adopted as official strategy.⁷⁶

The Beijing Conference heralded a new approach to WAD policy. However, it is seen by many scholars as being too ambitious, and thus not successful in its implementation.⁷⁷

Conclusion

WAD policy has made significant developments throughout the Decade. Starting with the WID paradigm, rooted in Western-centric modernisation theory, which takes into account women's differing role in development, towards a more Marxist vision which points to societal and economic structures as the cause for women's subordinate position, followed by a strong focus on women's influence during the development process in the form of autonomy, and the GAD paradigm which considers the relationship between women *and* men.

These developments were influenced by major global events such as the Cold War and economic developments. However, the developments did not just happen. They were set in motion by women's lobby, significantly the increase of women's movements from the Global South. There was a clear shift from Copenhagen to Nairobi where tensions declined. Women from the Global North had increased understanding for the position of women from the Global South because of a rise in research, along with the intercultural exchange throughout the Decade. Additionally, the upswing of postcolonial feminism had contributed to new perspectives and developments. Furthermore, the delegates were better prepared and had increased their diplomatic skills.

In this chapter I have also shown how there was a clear interplay between development co-operation and WAD paradigms. This interplay pushed shifts in thinking through WAD scholars' criticism of dominating development paradigms. For example, structuralist arguments by WAD scholars influenced the development of dependency theory, in which world regions are static in

72. John Harriss, "Development Theories," in *International Development: Ideas, Experience, and Prospects* (Oxford University Press, February 27, 2014), 44–45, accessed June 16, 2024, <https://academic.oup.com/book/35386>.

73. Petra Debusscher, "Mainstreaming gender in European Commission development policy: Conservative Europeanness?," *Women's Studies International Forum* 34, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 39–40, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277539510001287>.

74. Ransom and Bain, "Gendering Agricultural Aid," 53.

75. Ramos Shahani, "The UN, Women, and Development: The World Conferences on Women," 35.

76. Debusscher, "Mainstreaming gender in European Commission development policy," 39–40; Kilby, "From Women in Development to Gender Justice?," 84; Ransom and Bain, "Gendering Agricultural Aid," 53.

77. Kilby, "From Women in Development to Gender Justice?," 84–85.

their international roles due to global structures. Additionally, new broader progressions within the development cooperation field, such as the incorporation of neoliberalism, contributed to developments in WAD thinking.

The history of ideas perspective has allowed me to contextualise developments of WAD policies within broader global processes and display the paradigm shifts it has set in motion. I have thus put forward a new perspective that highlights the achievements of WAD in the form of ideas, instead of official policy outcomes, reaching more positive conclusions.

Chapter 2

The Power of ‘Book Club’

“Without radical voices you never get anything done. If you only have ladylike ladies saying ladylike things, nothing changes.”

- Joke Schrijvers

In chapter one, I have set out the proceedings, achievements, and significance of the Conferences of the Decade and relevant evolutions in WAD and development thinking. I will now explore how Dutch WAD policy developed during, because of, or in spite of. I will answer the following question: *What factors have influenced the progression of Dutch WAD policy between 1975-1985?* Through the conducted interviews, archival research, and review of secondary literature, I have identified four factors that influenced Dutch policy progression. I will further explore them in this chapter under the sections: *The effect of interpersonal relationships between women on policy making, The role of the Netherlands on the international stage on the topic of WAD, The influence of internal factors in the Netherlands on the creation of WAD development policy, and The effect of geopolitical factors on the outcome of the Conferences.*

Scholars are often negative about the outcomes of the Conferences and in turn the progression of WAD policy worldwide. Tripp, a renowned author specialised in gender and politics, described the Conferences merely as venues in which tensions between these groups could be played out.¹ Zinsser argues that the Conferences did serve a purpose, though merely a symbolic one. By creating an image of solidarity and action delegates were able to establish a good name for their countries on the international stage. Back home countries would rarely follow through, and actual change in the form of improved WAD policy was far out of reach.² Though some authors are more positive than others about the outcomes of the Conferences, in almost all academic work on the Conferences descriptions of tensions, unconquerable differences between women from different parts of the world, and overbearing national agendas are underlined as reasons for the supposed failure of the Conferences to create positive, urgently needed change.³

1. Tripp, “The Evolution of Transnational Feminisms,” 61.

2. Zinsser, “From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi,” 163.

3. Çağatay, Grown, and Santiago, “The Nairobi Women’s Conference,” 403; Tripp, “The Evolution of

Parpart for example, stresses the ‘little’ achievements of major development agencies, despite the ‘fanfare’ surrounding the decade.⁴ Her standpoint symbolises the general treatment of the Conferences in the academic debate. There is a prominent focus on the official outcome of policies and agreements, and those factors are used as the yardstick to measure the Conferences and subsequent national policies’ ‘success’, which are thus often defined as ‘failures.’ By analysing the Conferences through the eyes of the interviewees and reading the relevant literature and government documents with a different viewpoint, I pose a diverging interpretation to WAD policy development. Previous scholars have overlooked the lived experiences of those participating in the Conferences. By explicitly focusing on this aspect while tracing the history of ideas I will paint a more positive picture of the progression of WAD policy.

2.1 The effect of interpersonal relationships between women on policy making

When considering the progression of Dutch WAD policy, it is important to examine the interactions between those creating and influencing policy. After all, the formation of policy is a collective effort. Examining the importance and effect of interpersonal relations on policy formation will enrich the existing research which has a strong focus on the written outcomes of the Conferences. The exploration of personal relationships will provide insight into what happened in between the lines and shed light on informal interactions, which I argue had an important impact on the formation of policy.

According to scholars, divisions between First, Second, and Third World women can be found in the title of the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. It is these three words that represent the ideological differences between the groups: First World women aimed for equality, Second World women aimed for peace, and Third World women aimed for development.⁵ Due to the fundamental differences in what they aimed to achieve at the Conferences, it is believed that compromise was hard to reach. However, some scholars pose an alternative narrative. Dubel argues that that despite initial tensions, a strong international feminist movement was established at the end of the Decade, and that the Conferences fostered solidarity, collaboration, and friendships.⁶ This correlates with one of my main findings, which is that the Decade should not only be assessed through its literal outcomes, but that more importance should be placed on the ideological shifts that the Conferences set in motion and which influenced policy in significant ways. In short, the ‘fanfare’ of the Conferences did indeed create important change. An important factor in the creation of these ideological shifts was the approachable atmosphere at the Conferences that led to the creation of intercontinental networks and bonds of solidarity.

Transnational Feminisms,” 61; Zinsser, “From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi,” 142; West, “The United Nations Women’s Conferences and Feminist Politics,” 178–181; Jane L. Parpart, “Women’s Rights and the Lagos Plan of Action,” Publisher: Johns Hopkins University Press, *Human Rights Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (1986): 12–13, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/762282>.

4. Parpart, “Women’s Rights and the Lagos Plan of Action,” 12–13.

5. Dubel, “1975 - ‘Not just a year, but a lifetime for women,’” 7.

6. Dubel, 18.

International

The interviewees describe the atmosphere at the Conferences as exciting and fuelled by enthusiasm. To quote van Hussen, who held the position of CIWA from 1980-1988: “You had to fight [for creating WAD policy], it doesn’t just happen. But when I would go to a conference, I would fully recharge and I always likened myself to a sponge, completely full!”⁷ The interviewees recount the exchange of ideas that took place at the Conferences, made possible by an atmosphere in which women could easily approach each other, despite their differences. As van Hussen described it, they were just one of the many women attending the Conferences, trying to create positive change. She recalls when she was approached by a woman from India: “Now you listen to me,” the woman said, and she told van Hussen about a local development project she had set up, asking for van Hussen to bring her in direct contact with people at the Dutch ministry to ask for financial support. And so it was done. Two years later, during a visit to the Dutch ministry, the woman noticed van Hussen and told her, “Jose, you remember? you told me!” This anecdote shows how a low threshold atmosphere allowed women to help each other and create direct lines of contact, fostering camaraderie and solidarity. This differed from other global conferences at which formal diplomatic rules defined the atmosphere.⁸

It was not only these informal bonds of support that were created, but friendships also grew from the contacts established between women from different parts of the world. Blankhart describes her friendship with Devaki Jain, an Indian economist and writer, who was part of the international women’s network Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). They met when Blankhart was working as a project officer for India and again in Delhi in 1984 during Blankhart’s time as CIWA 1987-1992. Blankhart and Jain stayed in touch, seeing each other at international conferences and speaking regularly. Blankhart emphasizes their bond by stating how Jain’s children would stay with her whenever they would travel to the Netherlands, and they remained close friends for a long time.⁹ Moreover, upon mentioning that Thelma Awori was interviewed for this research, two Dutch interviewees asked for her information, as they would love to get in touch with an old friend they had lost contact with.¹⁰

These examples show how the Dutch women of the ‘Bookclub’ established informal relations with women on an international level, bridging the divide between the First and Third World. Although they may have had different agendas corresponding to the title of the Decade: Equality, Peace, and Development, the Dutch women describe a shared understanding of a common struggle, motivation, and enthusiasm for a better future. This positive description of the Conferences’ atmosphere has been echoed internationally, with Leticia Ramos Shahani, former Senator of the Philippines and Secretary General of the Nairobi Conference, stating that the “ease and speed with which women communicated along informal and flexible lines” was already present at Mexico.¹¹

7. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

8. Ramos Shahani, “The UN, Women, and Development: The World Conferences on Women,” 30.

9. Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author.

10. Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author; Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

11. Ramos Shahani, “The UN, Women, and Development: The World Conferences on Women,” 29.



Figure 2.1: Blankhart and her family at Jain's house, India 2000. Blankhart personal archives.



PhotoScan by Google Photos

Figure 2.2: Blankhart, her youngest daughter, and Jain, India 2000. Blankhart personal archives.

Bonds created due to the informal atmosphere at the Conferences made intercontinental transactions possible. This led to the creation of international networks and formal institutes, including the influential Global South network DAWN and the UN Institute for Training and Research on the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which was created after Mexico in 1975.¹² Although DAWN was primarily made up of representatives of countries in the Global South, Lycklama was also a part of the founding group. Her peers ascribe this to her ability to utilise the informal atmosphere to foster strong bonds with women at an international level. As colleague Laetitia van den Assum described in her biography: “Geertje [...] made sure to get the most out of it [the Conferences] on all three levels: ideas for policy, academic research and supporting women in developing countries. She built an impressive network. Everyone in the world knew who she was.”¹³

Another important network that Lycklama was a part of was the Dutch Network of Women in Development Agencies in the Netherlands (*Vrouwenberaad*), a group of women involved in WAD from various sectors including politics, academics, and

12. Ramos Shahani, 30.

13. Johanneke Liemburg, *Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt (1938-2014): feministisch stratege*, Google-Books-ID: xLCxzwEACAAJ (Noordboek, 2023), 152.



Figure 2.3: Leticia Shahani, Secretary-General of the Women's Conference addressing a press conference, 15 July 1985. UN Photo/Milton Grant (UN7770610), <https://media.un.org/photo/en/asset/oun7/oun7770610>

NGOs. The organisations' responsibilities were influencing policy, stimulating research, and broadening the network within the Netherlands.¹⁴ They were highly influential in shaping Dutch WAD policies. The short ties between DAWN and *Vrouwenberaad* allowed women to learn from each other and stimulated the alignment of goals, which they could then translate into national policies. For example, one of the pillars in DAWN's ideology is the support of grassroots movements. Similarly, the *Vrouwenberaad* pushed the Dutch government and NGOs to directly fund local women's movements.¹⁵

The informal atmosphere at the Conferences thus resulted in strong intercontinental networks and bonds that were influential in policy formulation.

National

Similar bonds of mutual respect, friendship, and solidarity were established at a national level. This was not only evident in the ways the interviewees described their positive cooperation and memories, but also in non-verbal cues. It was evident in their facial expressions when discussing each other, sending me along with well-wishes and regards for other interviewees, and in one instance even lending me a book knowing that I would interview an old friend of hers later that week, assuring that the book would get back to her. Moreover, two of the women insisted that they were interviewed together, saying they would be able to enrich each others stories, and they lived close anyway. Most of all, it is evidenced by the ongoing existence of the Bookclub, which continues to meet regularly.¹⁶ The way their ties have persevered until this day shows

14. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

15. Dubel, "1975-1985."

16. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author; Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author.

how close their connections were at the time. The Dutch WAD movement formed a united front and was officially solidified in the creation of the *Vrouwenberaad*. It is clear from the interviews that the women involved look back positively at the bonds they had created. However, it could be possible that they see history through the rose coloured glasses of memory, and leave out instances where their interactions were not all sunshine and roses. Others put on a different pair of glasses when looking into the past.

Pronk explicitly emphasizes an “ideological battle” that had emerged during his absence as MDC between 1977 and 1989. It was unclear what exactly was the cause of this rift, but it seemed that some women preferred a more pragmatic WAD approach, as opposed to others who wanted a more radical policy. This had a negative effect on the creation of policy, according to Pronk.¹⁷ This ideological divide is confirmed by multiple other interviewees, though the weight and effect of it was not emphasized as strongly. On the ‘radical’ side was Saskia Wieringa, a sociologist who worked at the ISS, conducting research on WAD funded by the MFA. Her research had a strong focus on women from developing countries, their perspectives and concerns. Though she did face criticism, the most harsh instances did not come from within the WAD movement, but from outside. Wieringa does not deny discussions with others within the WAD movement. However, she emphasises the ways in which the more pragmatic approach that some took complimented the radical one of others: “you need both.”¹⁸ She spoke of Lycklama who worked with Wieringa at the ISS, where Lycklama was professor of women and development studies before she became rector.¹⁹ Lycklama’s diplomatic, pragmatic approach allowed for Wieringa’s ideas and research methods to be taken more seriously. This way, more could be achieved not despite, but because of their differences.²⁰

This sentiment is echoed by Teresa Fogelberg, director of the Department of Women and Development at the MFA from 1990-1995. While she does recall strong ideological differences between the pragmatic and the radical, she stresses the all transcending mutual support that connected women.²¹ It was this, combined with the strong social and leadership abilities of Fogelberg and others, that ensured that ideological differences were prevented from getting in the way of furthering the WAD policy agenda.

2.2 The role of the Netherlands on the international stage on the topic of WAD

The Dutch attitude on the international stage was a direct translation of their approach to WAD policy formation. They took on a leading role in the field, which allowed them to spread and expand this approach. The dominant way of development policy thinking was rooted in Western-centred theory, but in this section I will demonstrate that the Dutch WAD approach diverged from this paradigm. There was explicit awareness of

17. Jan Pronk, Semi-structured interview with author, March 4, 2024, Den Haag.

18. Saskia Wieringa, Semi-structured interview with author, March 27, 2024, Den Haag.

19. Liemburg, *Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt (1938-2014)*, 167.

20. Wieringa, Semi-structured interview with author.

21. Teresa Fogelberg, Semi-structured interview with author, March 28, 2024, Dordrecht.

their position as a Western country with a colonial past, and a motivation to not let this influence policy. Schrijvers attributes this to the field of anthropology, in which the research that served as foundation of the policy was rooted. Anthropology has a high degree of cultural and historical relativisation, as well as a strong focus on reflexivity and positionality. These characteristics were then also considered during the creation of policy.²² Of course this does not mean that Dutch WAD policy was free from any of the paternalistic, saviourist, or neo-colonial elements that defined much development practice at the time, nor that everybody involved in the formation of the policy held the same viewpoints. Nevertheless, I will demonstrate that there was a strong favour towards an approach characterised by listening instead of telling, dialogue instead of imposing, and researching instead of preaching.

This approach is already evident at Mexico, when Pronk commissioned Postel and Schrijvers to write *Vrouwen op Weg*. Due to the slow start of preparations for the Conference by the UN secretariat in New York, the women only had six weeks to create the study.²³ Schrijvers describes how they had to start from scratch: “There was absolutely nothing. Look, there was already little known about [the position of women in] Western countries. [...] The position and circumstances of women in developing countries were a totally unknown subject here in the Western world.”²⁴

The advice they composed aims for a strong focus on the perspectives and agency of women from the Global South, and shows an eagerness for dialogue and cooperation. It is self aware of the Western lens, colonial legacy, and power relations that influence development cooperation and policy focused on the Global South. Although six weeks was not enough time to establish direct contact with women in developing countries, they aimed to root their research in literature written by authors from the included countries. The conclusions drawn from the research reflect the above described sentiment; to introduce their list of policy recommendations, they state: “Emancipation policy within the framework of development cooperation, in order to forestall its descent into paternalism and the imposition of a Western cultural paradigm, ought to be focused on...”²⁵ Furthermore, in the epilogue, where the authors reflect on Mexico, it is emphasised that many personal conversations with women from the Global South allowed for the ideas in the advice to be ‘tested’. This is followed by a list of points of overlap that were recommended in the advice and recognised by said women. This shows the willingness of the researchers to follow through, listen, and improve.²⁶

The value of the importance of research was not only underlined at a national, but also at an international level. Pronk’s statement at Mexico underlined that he aimed to especially focus on the “people from the bottom.”²⁷ During the conference, he proposed a resolution (later accepted) that requested a UN-research-program.²⁸ Next to the strong focus on research, Pronk also lobbied for Global South initiated political aims

22. Joke Schrijvers, Semi-structured interview with author, March 12, 2024, Leiden.

23. Els Postel-Coster and Joke Schrijvers, *Vrouwen op Weg* (Assen: van Gorcum, 1976), voorwoord.

24. Schrijvers, Semi-structured interview with author.

25. Postel-Coster and Schrijvers, *Vrouwen op Weg*, 112.

26. Postel-Coster and Schrijvers, 114–115.

27. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, “Statement by the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation,” *VN Wereldconferentie Jaar van de vrouw Informatiebulletin* (Den Haag), June 23, 1975,

28. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, “Nederlandse ontwerp-resolutie aanvaard,” *VN-Wereldconferentie Jaar van de vrouw Informatiebulletin* (Den Haag), July 1, 1975,

such as the NIEO. He declared: “we hold the opinion that the present economic order, resulting in huge inequalities, did and does not serve the world well.” This ideology found overlap with a call by Global South delegations for a more just division of wealth and well-being as a necessary condition for emancipation of women and men.²⁹ The Dutch delegation also contributed to an effort alongside the Canadian and Norwegian governments who made it possible to bring participants from Global South countries to Mexico.³⁰ The progressive outlook of the Dutch delegation stands in contrast with that of other countries. For example, a quote from the president of the Philippines’ wife’s statement: “Men and women were carved from a stick of bamboo. The man from the strong, the woman from the beautiful part.”³¹ These instances show how the Dutch approach to WAD policy formation was rooted in considering the interests of those the policy was aimed at.

After Mexico, the Netherlands took on a frontrunner role on the topic of WAD worldwide because of two reasons. Firstly, the broad political action taken by the Netherlands after Mexico. In the Declaration of Mexico, it was agreed that all countries should implement national machinery that would serve the purpose of improving their national and international policy focused on women.³² The Netherlands were among the first to do so. Pronk started implementing the advice set out in *Vrouwen op Weg* and continued to create space for women to contribute to formulating WAD policy at the MFA. He created the function of CIWA in 1977, which made the Netherlands the first to create such a role.³³ The position was a shared part-time role, meaning that it was filled by two women at the same time. The first two being Geertje Lycklama and Ellettha Schoustra. Moreover, *sector specialists* were appointed at Dutch embassies in Global South countries in 1985 with the specific task of focusing on women.³⁴ The second reason the Netherlands was able to gain a respected position on the international stage concerning WAD policy was the extensive knowledge produced on the subject through state-sponsored research. Pronk financed research that allowed scholars to conduct fieldwork on three *concentration countries*, countries that Dutch policy focused on. This included Sri Lanka, Egypt, and Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta). At Leiden University a special research and documentation centre for WAD was developed by Schrijvers and Postel, under the name of Centre for Women and Development (VENO). Later, their name changed to Centre for Women and Autonomy (VENA).³⁵ Other Northern countries also employed progressive WAD policy.

29. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, “Statement by the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation - Constructive Attitude,” *VN Wereldconferentie Jaar van de vrouw Informatiebulletin* (Den Haag), June 23, 1975,

30. United Nations, *World Conference of the International Women’s Year Information for Participants* (Mexico City, 1975).

31. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *VN-Wereldconferentie Jaar van de vrouw Informatiebulletin* (Den Haag), June 27, 1975,

32. United Nations, *Report of the World Conference of the International Women’s Year* (New York: United Nations, March 1976).

33. Kamerstukken II, *Nota naar aanleiding van het verslag over het onderdeel ontwikkelings samenwerking*.

34. Dubel, “1975 - ‘Not just a year, but a lifetime for women,’” 18–19; Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author; Kamerstukken II, *Actieprogramma Vrouwen en Ontwikkeling, 1986-1987, 19992*, no. 1 (Den Haag: De Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, P. Bukman).

35. Liemburg, *Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt (1938-2014)*, 132–133; Schrijvers, Semi-structured interview

Along with countries such as Sweden, who is mentioned by many of the interviewees as being on the same page and pace as the Netherlands on the topic of WAD policy, the Netherlands was represented in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s - a forum uniting various Western countries - Development Assistance Committee (DAC) division, which then formed a Women's group, the OECD-DAC-WID. They came together twice a year in Paris to exchange ideas, which stimulated efforts and inspired action.³⁶

One of the ways in which the Netherlands utilised their position on the international stage is through a program by the ISS in which women from Global South countries were able to participate in courses on WAD. After which they would return to their home countries to work in the field or at the embassies. There was thus a certain indirect influence due to the ISS educational program, allowing their standpoints and research methods to spread internationally.³⁷ While this may be viewed as an imposition of Western norms, the outward looking perspective that placed an emphasis on the agency of women from the Global South fostered grounds for intercultural learning rather than dictating specific ways of doing research.

Their frontrunner position led the Dutch WAD movement to be able to share their knowledge with other countries. Blankhart recalls when she was invited to Japan to share their strategies and views on WAD policy during the IFIC International Seminar on Women in Development in 1991.³⁸ In her speech, one of the factors she identified as mistakes made in WAD policy formulation globally was "that development strategies formulated by Western donors are implicitly based on their own cultural backgrounds."³⁹ This shows the self awareness by the Dutch of their historical position on the international stage.

Around the same time Fogelberg organised a seminar on Women in Development, on June 13th 1991. It was based on the policy paper by Pronk titled *A World of Difference*, in which he ushered in a new strategy for development cooperation upon his return as minister. One of the main strategies underlined in the paper is that of autonomy.⁴⁰ The seminar was titled: *Women in Development: Advancing towards Autonomy*, and women representing various parts of the world participated. The participants reacted positively to the Dutch viewpoints and strategies. Thelma Awori, also a speaker at the conference, complimented the Netherlands on its progressive thinking: "In the Netherlands, one can always count on a willingness and partnership."⁴¹ She stated that Pronk's policy expresses a strong political will to do more for women and applauded his policy paper. Virginia Vargas, a sociologist from Peru, emphasised that thinking

with author.

36. Devaki Jain, "Passion: Driving the Feminist Movement Forward," Publisher: Johns Hopkins University Press, *Journal of Women's History* 24, no. 4 (2012): 201–207, accessed June 27, 2024, <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/pub/1/article/492528>.

37. Dubel, "1975 - 'Not just a year, but a lifetime for women'," 19.

38. Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author.

39. Japan International Cooperation Agency, *IFIC International Seminar on Women in Development - WID strategies and practices of DAC member countries* -, 02 (Tokyo, August 7, 1991).

40. Kamerstukken II, *Een Wereld van Verschil. Nieuwe Kaders voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking in de Jaren Negentig*, 1990-91, 21813 V, no. 1-2 (Den Haag: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken).

41. *Women in Development: Advancing towards Autonomy*, Background documents 2 (Den Haag: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 1992), 33–35.



Figure 2.4: OECD DAC Seminar on Women in Development, Japan 1991. Blankhart personal archives.

about autonomy, development, and cooperation is dominated by the Global North, and that it is still seen as a one way process from North to South. She underlined the need for the North to look inwards.⁴²



Figure 2.5: Pronk and Fogelberg at *Women and Development: Advancing Towards Autonomy*, Den Haag 1991.

Although awareness of the Dutch position does not immediately absolve them of potential harmful behaviour, it was the starting point for their WAD policy. Organising and attending international seminars not only gave the Dutch WAD policy makers an opportunity to share this approach, it also served as a platform for international dialogue during which they were open to criticism as demonstrated during the *Advancing towards Autonomy* seminar. Now, more than 33 years later, dr. Awori remembers working closely with the Dutch national committee and Pronk: “I felt that he listened and he tried to make things happen, and those ambassadors [...] they were very involved

⁴². *Women in Development: Advancing towards Autonomy*, 25–31.

with us [...] to make sure that the policies of their governments were conducive.”⁴³

2.3 The influence of internal factors in the Netherlands on the creation of WAD development policy

The circumstances around and actors involved in Dutch WAD policy making have not been documented extensively in the academic field. By adding to the limited academic research into this topic from a different perspective encompassing the history of ideas and lived experiences I will shed more light on the internal proceedings and formation of Dutch WAD policy.

The ‘story’ of the internal factors of influence on the creation of Dutch WAD policy can be told through the efforts of including the term ‘autonomy’ into official policy papers. Autonomy has been defined in the FLS as enabling “women to define and defend their own interests and needs.”⁴⁴ Research had shown that the strategy was more effective at achieving self-sufficiency for women than the strategies of integration or participation.⁴⁵ Therefore, the implementation of autonomy was a goal of the *Vrouwenberaad*, along with many other women concerned with furthering WAD policy, especially women from the Global South. However, there were obstacles that the Dutch women faced in their mission.

In order to be able to implement and influence policy, one must be in a position of influence. That was the first obstacle. While the Netherlands is often seen as a progressive country historically, the motivations for change were not always honest. Women gained the right to vote in 1919. However, this decision faced much resistance, and a prominent motivation for the decision was that the political party in charge was of the belief it would favour them in upcoming elections.⁴⁶ This shows how there was little political will to support women in their demands to enter the workforce. Women had been active in politics throughout the 1950s and 1960s, though their numbers were limited. They received support from left wing parties, but the right remained conservative.⁴⁷ This background paints a picture of the political landscape the WAD women - those who would later form the Bookclub - entered.

Pronk entered his role as MDC in 1973. It was primarily due to his leadership, position of power, emancipated worldview, and progressive policies that women were able to fulfill positions of influence within the ministry. However, when the shared position of CIWA was created in 1977, it inevitably received criticism. There were, apparently, men who were of the belief that they would be able to fulfill the task themselves. Van Hussen laughs at the memory: “they [believed they] could do anything!”⁴⁸ Unfortunately, this sentiment was not left behind in the 1970s. In 1986, the belief that

43. Thelma Awori, Semi-structured interview with author, March 15, 2024, via Zoom.

44. United Nations, *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985*, paragraph 331.

45. Keuper, “Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en gender,” 17.

46. Alies Pegtel, *Zij in de geschiedenis* (Walburg Pers, October 10, 2019), 95–96, accessed May 4, 2024, <https://www.walburgpers.nl/nl/book/9789462494527/zij-in-de-geschiedenis>.

47. Pegtel, *Zij in de geschiedenis*; Pronk, Semi-structured interview with author.

48. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

the position did not necessarily have to be filled by a woman once again gained traction at the MFA. They received a letter in response from the foreman of the *Gemeenschappelijk Overleg Medefinanciering (GOM)*, the umbrella organisation of the four NGOs receiving money from the government for development cooperation. The letter read as follows:

“Dear mr. Hoekman,
Because inconsiderately tapping you on the shoulder or an informal phone call in your direction may not be attributed to my daily tasks, I opt for a note to let you know I looked up in surprise when [...] I was alerted by a slightly agitated *Vrouwenberaad* [...] of the dawning departmental intention to not have the [...] post of Coordinator for International Women’s Affairs be filled by a woman. [...] Given the specific character of the function [...] I fear that many will share in my surprise. [...] It would please me if the preceding could thus, with a sweeping gesture and provided with the label: ‘false alarm,’ disappear into your bin.
Kind regards,
On behalf of the GOM
Jaap Dijkstra”⁴⁹

As the above shows, the women, once at their post, did receive support from various men in positions of power. However, the next obstacle remained the facing of the male dominated culture they had entered, in which this support was not a given. The WAD women at the ministry had to prove themselves constantly.⁵⁰ Fogelberg echoes this sentiment. During her medical exam that was part of the application process to the MFA, she was told not let on that she was pregnant, as she would be rejected for the role. She describes the attitude of many of her male colleagues, characterised by statements such as: “all those women who start working here keep getting themselves pregnant.” She recalls how little support there was for female staff in general, receiving angry looks resulting in stiff relationships with male colleagues.⁵¹

Joke Swiebel, working at the Directorate Coordination Emancipation Policy (DCE) under the MSA, also commented on the male dominated culture at the government. However, Swiebel reflects differently on female solidarity. She recalls differing viewpoints and experiences between groups focusing on differing aspects of women’s affairs. Women were in the minority at the MSA, and most of Swiebel’s negotiation partners outside the Ministry were male as well. Within this environment she understood that it would benefit her to speak the language of the men around her, as they would be more inclined to take her seriously.⁵² The ‘WAD ladies’, as she called them, were part of a new field of policy, which uninterested male colleagues could simply ignore. Swiebel uses the metaphor of a test: “If you showed that you had a solid understanding of the material that was important to the high bosses, you could join in. Let’s say once I passed that exam, I was appreciated. [...] the WAD women did something

49. Letter to Drs. J.B. Hoekman concerning: Coördinator Women’s Affairs (August 22, 1986).

50. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

51. Fogelberg, Semi-structured interview with author.

52. Swiebel, Semi-structured interview with author.

completely different so they couldn't take that exam."⁵³

In Swiebel's retelling, these differences led to tension between women concerned with international women's affairs; of the three parties involved - the DCE, the Directorate of International Organisations (DIO) of the MFA, and the WAD women - the first two got along smoothly. Swiebel recalls sometimes feeling irritated with the latter group: "they would bring up things and we would think, oh god guys, come on now." Their paths would rarely cross, and when they did, during, for example, interdepartmental preparatory commission meetings, their interactions were quite formal.

In contrast, the 'WAD ladies' recall solidarity as the main aspect of female relations at the time. Their contrasting viewpoints show on the one hand how the latter group has a tendency to reminisce with rose-coloured glasses. On the other hand it shows how WAD women moved within a certain bubble. In looking back, Helleman admits that she was not actively involved in national women's emancipation affairs.⁵⁴ This allowed them to remain submerged in an atmosphere where international connection and the exchange of ideas were imperative and the primary goal was to improve the position of women from the Global South, which may have made them insensitive to the struggles and differing experiences of women nationally. This contrast will have caused tensions between women working at the Dutch government. In reality, there is presumably nuanced truth in both recollections of the groups' interactions.

The obstacle of lack of support from male colleagues thus extended to female colleagues. However, despite the lack of support, the WAD women used their creativity in order to get those sceptical of the importance of WAD issues involved and understanding of their significance. Lycklama's biography describes an instance where she wanted to organise a conference on women's position in developing countries during her time at the University of Wageningen. However, knowing that men would not attend as they did not take interest in such a subject, she chose to call it: Small Farmers, to men unknown that small farmers were mostly women. She received a great turn out. Even though most men left during the coffee break, she had managed to bring their attention to women's issues, even if just for a little while.⁵⁵ Van Hussen employed another strategy in order to make men understand women's position in developing countries. The WAD team at the MFA, in cooperation with VENA, had taken it upon themselves to provide WAD training within the ministries' departments as well as for external donor organisations. Instead of simply explaining the women's situation to them, van Hussen would turn it around and ask the participants: "If you were a women's organisation in a developing country, how would you pick a suitable donor?" This way the participating organisations gained a better understanding of the aid recipients' perspective, and were encouraged to take their voices more seriously.⁵⁶ This shows how various obstacles could be overcome by individual skills and creativity.

However, despite positive or humorous retellings of their struggles in hindsight, in reality, individual expertise was not always enough to overcome the dominant sexist zeitgeist. Wieringa describes the resistance she faced as a strong supporter of research conducted in and by women from Global South countries. Obtaining her undergradu-

53. Swiebel, Semi-structured interview with author.

54. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

55. Liemburg, *Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt (1938-2014)*, 163.

56. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

ate degree in Amsterdam, she was part of a student movement that was parallel to the one in Leiden in the 1970s. The Amsterdam movement was characterised by younger participants with a more Marxist-socialist outlook, in contrast to the more functionalist movement in Leiden. She was thus on the more radical side of WAD thinking: “my character isn’t as soft or patient as Geertje’s was.”⁵⁷ Wieringa kept her activist tendencies upon joining the ISS, where she held a key position in the MFA funded research in Egypt, Sri Lanka, and Burkina Faso. However, despite her extensive academic achievements she describes an unwelcome atmosphere: “those old men [in charge at the ISS] did not like me.” Next to labeling her viewpoints as too radical, they also did not accept her sexual orientation. Conflict rose, and Wieringa experienced serious animosity, which a mediator had described as ‘mobbing at the workplace.’ Upon Wieringa calling the ISS a *patriarchal gerontocracy*, they instigated a teaching ban. Wieringa left the ISS.⁵⁸ This shows how conservative male dominated culture impacted the workplace environment of women. Wieringa was able to continue her research at the University of Amsterdam, but it is impossible to say what she could have achieved if she had been able to continue her work at the ISS.

At the MFA, women faced the obstacle of changing political climates and altering people at the post of MDC during the Decade. Most were not as progressive as Pronk. Once the WAD women were better represented through the ministry they had begun actively lobbying for the strategy of autonomy. Pronk’s successor, Jan de Koning of the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) party, continued the support the WAD women’s endeavours, despite his party’s conservative political views. Once again, this was partly due to the women’s political savvy. For example, Lycklama had written the first policy memorandum on WAD, which she handed over to De Koning during an informal lunch at Copenhagen at the suggestion of his wife, who was an acquaintance of Lycklama. De Koning turned it in to parliament in 1980.⁵⁹ Though not in favour of the *Vrouwenberaad*’s ambitious aims, De Koning did not prevent Dutch participation in WAD trends, outlining the transition from integration to participation in a 1981 memorandum.⁶⁰

Succeeding ministers, starting with Eegje Schoo of the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) in 1982, continued the trend of support. With her background at the *Emanicipatieraad*, Schoo was willing to implement more policies that furthered the *Vrouwenberaad*’s agenda, such as the sector specialists. It was during her term that criticism of integration was officially acknowledged in Dutch policy documents and language suggesting the meaning of autonomy was introduced: “In the preparations for the Third Women’s Conference for the United Nations (Nairobi, July 1985), more attention is given to the need to give women opportunities and tools to contribute to the changes that are taking place in their society.”⁶¹ A year later the term first appears in official documents: “more attention to the need to strengthen the *autonomy* of

57. Wieringa, Semi-structured interview with author.

58. Wieringa.

59. Liemburg, *Geertje Lycklama à Nijeholt (1938-2014)*, 153.

60. Kamerstukken II, *Notitie Vrouwen in Ontwikkelingssamenwerking*, 1980-81, 16400 V, no. 9 (Den Haag: Departement van Buitenlandse Zaken).

61. Kamerstukken II, *Nota naar aanleiding van het verslag*, 1984-85, 18600, no. 16 (Den Haag: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (Deel ontwikkelingssamenwerking)), 21.

women and women's groups, to further the participation and influence of women to the development process."⁶²

Piet Bukman, CDA, took over from Schoo in 1986. He recognised the developments achieved before his term, and did not want to 'rally' everyone against him (as van Hussen described it), so he did not challenge already established WAD policies.⁶³ Nevertheless, including autonomy into official policy was too progressive. He wanted his program of action (PoA) to highlight the strategy of 'participation' instead. Van Hussen: "well, in the end, I got him to add the word 'active'! *Active Participation* implies more independence. Well, he allowed that!"⁶⁴

Following Nairobi, the National Advisory Council for Development Cooperation (NAR) had published an advice in which they underlined the importance of the strategy of autonomy.⁶⁵ The advice provided extra foundation for the lobby for autonomy, and was reiterated by the *Vrouwenberaad* and the Commission for Development Cooperation (of which Pronk was a member) in order to encourage Bukman to incorporate the term into official policy.⁶⁶ In response, Bukman argued that he avoided using the term autonomy as it could "cause confusion in international context as well as in developing countries."⁶⁷ He did underline how he did not mean that women should be regarded as passive participants by male imposed process of development. Once again, the meaning of autonomy is implied, without the use of the term. This proves how paradigm shifts in WAD thinking can take place regardless of the official term used.

Pronk's return as MDC in 1989 signified a reform of policy, established in *A World of Difference*. In the document, he officially announced the shift from active participation to autonomy.⁶⁸

2.4 The effect of geopolitical factors on the outcome of the Conferences

Many authors point to the controversies surrounding geopolitical conflicts and disputes as the cause of the supposed 'failure' of the Conferences. They believe these disputes overshadowed the primary aims for the Conferences, being the improvement of the position of women globally.⁶⁹ Though it is imperative to view the Conferences in the context of broader global developments, this approach often leads to defining the Con-

62. Kamerstukken II, *Begroting van uitgaven*, 1984-85, 18600, no. 2 (Den Haag: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken), 86.

63. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

64. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author; Kamerstukken II, *Actieprogramma Vrouwen en Ontwikkeling*.

65. Nationale Adviesraad voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, *Advies Vrouwen en Ontwikkeling* (Den Haag, 1985).

66. Letter to Minister of Development Cooperation (October 5, 1987); Kamerstukken II, *Lijst van vragen*, 1987-1988, 19992, no. 2 (Den Haag: Commissie voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking).

67. Kamerstukken II, *Lijst van antwoorden*, 1987-1988, 19992, no. 3 (Den Haag: De Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, P. Bukman).

68. Kamerstukken II, *Een Wereld van Verschil. Nieuwe Kaders voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking in de Jaren Negentig*; Kamerstukken II, *Actieprogramma Vrouwen en Ontwikkeling*, 1989-1990, 19992, no. 5 (Den Haag: De Minister voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, J. P. Pronk).

69. Tripp, "The Evolution of Transnational Feminisms," 61-63.

ferences success' only by whether or not a document is adopted by consensus and the formal agreements made. In this section I will show how the Conferences managed to achieve significant progress despite urgent geopolitical events also being a point of discussion.

Many are not so positive. Pronk views the entirety of the 1980s as a lost decade, and he is not the only one.⁷⁰ Although he did not attend Nairobi, according to him, it "wasn't really worth anything." It was merely a confirmation of what had been achieved in the previous Conferences. He points to the international economic crisis of the early 1980s which led to countries having to adapt and cut back financially on topics that are not as relevant to national economic growth, including WAD policy.⁷¹

Scholars agree that global events intervened in prioritising women's issues. Jutta Joachim argues that there was international discontentment following Mexico as it was 'overshadowed' by global conflicts, such as the Cold War and debates around issues such as Zionism, Apartheid, and neocolonialism. She reaffirms the belief that the Conferences were used by delegates to further their own national interests.⁷² Staudt and Glickman, who approach the topic of the Decade from an Africa-focused perspective, state that the Conference and its possibility for progress for African women was overshadowed by global systems.⁷³ For example, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was a highly contested topic. One that was mentioned by eight out of ten individuals I interviewed.⁷⁴ It is thus undeniable that such debates played a role and were discussed during the Conferences. The most notable instance being at Copenhagen, at the end of which the Dutch delegation refused to sign the PoA, as it included the clause *Zionism is racism*, to which they were opposed.⁷⁵

I will use the example of this clause to highlight a prominent issue throughout the Decade. Although it came to the fore most notably at Copenhagen, the clause had already been introduced at Mexico by countries from the Global South. Like Copenhagen, the clause caused much controversy in 1975, and led multiple countries to abstain from voting. The US, Canada, Australia, and Israel voted against it.⁷⁶ The inclusion of the clause was once again attempted at Nairobi, when the session was headed by Margaret Kenyatta, the president of the conference. She resolved the dispute by changing the wording of the clause, in which Zionism was replaced by "all other forms of racism and racial discrimination," using her gravel before other delegates could in-

70. Antrobus, "A Decade for Women," 67.

71. Pronk, Semi-structured interview with author.

72. Jutta Joachim, "Framing Issues and Seizing Opportunities: The UN, NGOs, and Women's Rights," Publisher: [International Studies Association, Wiley], *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2003): 255–256, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/3693544>.

73. Kathleen Staudt and Harvey Glickman, "Beyond Nairobi: Women's Politics and Policies in Africa Revisited," Publisher: Cambridge University Press, *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 17, no. 2 (1989): 4–6, accessed May 14, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/1167037>.

74. Pronk, Semi-structured interview with author; Schrijvers, Semi-structured interview with author; Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author; Swiebel, Semi-structured interview with author; Fogelberg, Semi-structured interview with author; Wieringa, Semi-structured interview with author; Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

75. Dubel, "1975 - 'Not just a year, but a lifetime for women,'" 15–16.

76. Irene Tinker, "Introduction," in *Developing power: how women transformed international development*, 1st Feminist Press ed, OCLC: 56214177 (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2004), XXIV, accessed May 27, 2024, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0421/2004019268.html>.

tervene and allow for an overshadowing of the issues at the conference.⁷⁷

This example shows how individuals influence the course of action, preventing issues from dominating a conference to the extent at which the primary goal is overshadowed. Joachim describes how at Nairobi, instead of Violence Against Women being a debate that divided, as it had been before, the women had taken control of it. They moved past their differences and made it one of their, quoting a participant: “strongest points of common experience.”⁷⁸

It is this sentiment of common experience that I want to highlight. Indeed, the Copenhagen PoA was not adopted, and there were instances of heated debates on topics not always relevant to improving the situation of women globally. Nevertheless, I have proved that despite this, the Conferences succeeded in bringing the topic of WAD to the fore, and furthering paradigm shifts in development thinking through the formation and exchange of ideas.

The more time progressed, the more normalised it became to take women’s issues into consideration. Helleman worked at the Dutch embassy in Indonesia for five years. She describes how, when she first arrived, she would often bring up the issue of WAD herself. However, later others would bring it up: “it was completely self-evident. Even the executors themselves, and they were just school principals or heads of education committees in the village. Yes, they really paid attention to the topic. [...] But in agriculture it’s also integrated, I mean, it’s everywhere, it has just become an essential part of policy, without anyone having to mention it separately.”⁷⁹

Conclusion

In this chapter I have given explanations for the progress made by those involved in the Dutch WAD field on a national and international level. Through analysis of the interviews in combination with official policy documents it has become clear that individual agency and the strength of networks played a significant role in the progression of Dutch WAD aims, nationally and globally. The first factor that has contributed to this is the informal, low threshold atmosphere at the Conferences. This allowed for the formation of bonds of camaraderie, which became important tools in facilitating transnational cooperation. The networks that sprouted from the Conferences served as a vessel through which concepts and ideas could be exchanged, adjusted, and created. It also facilitated the advancement of political ideas such as autonomy, thereby aiding in the progression of Dutch WAD policy.

The second factor that led to the momentum of Dutch WAD policy was their role on the international stage. It is evident that there was a strong desire by Dutch WAD women to create policy tailored to non-Western perspectives and concerns. They gained a prominent role on the international stage due to early and broad political action on the WAD field, as well as state sponsored research. Because of this role they were able to advocate for this vision globally.

Internally, various factors allowed for the progression of policy. Pronk’s idealistic vision had created space for women to become involved in the WAD conversation at

77. West, “The United Nations Women’s Conferences and Feminist Politics,” 180.

78. Joachim, “Framing Issues and Seizing Opportunities,” 256.

79. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

a prominent level at the MFA. They in turn created strong bonds that resulted in the influential *Vrouwenberaad* network. Their cohesive strength and individual skill led to the furthering of a progressive Dutch policy agenda despite more conservative MDC's and a male dominated atmosphere.

Although geopolitical factors often came to the fore during Conferences, it was due to increased political skill and international connection that the Conferences remained focused. Moreover, a history of ideas perspective has shown that even though plans may not have been officially accepted due to the prominence of these debates, the formation and exchange of ideas did still take place at the Conference.

Women continued to challenge dominant ways of thinking and set in motion paradigm shifts that would have taken place otherwise. The Conferences had set ideas in motion that could not be taken back once uttered and that became imprinted into the minds of those attending.

Chapter 3

We're Just Getting Started

"We've been through that first step. People have accepted in their heads that you must include women. [...] What needs to happen in this second stage is that we must say here are the ways to do it."

- Thelma Awori

As shown in the previous chapters, the formulation of WAD policy had made tremendous progress throughout the Decade; establishing national machinery, strengthening global women's networks, and furthering strategies, such as autonomy, that provided more agency to women from the Global South. However, global and national research has shown that the position of women has not improved, and in some instances even deteriorated over the Decade.¹ As a DGIS report stated in 1987: "A recent study of the Operations Review Unit of the MFA shows that a significant gap exists between policy and practice"² An evaluation report of WAD policy between 1985-1996 the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the MFA states: "The evaluation also found that over the years, the preparation of policy proposals had received ample attention, but their translation into policy practice left something to be desired."³

The dominant way of measuring implementation of policy thus paints a narrative of futile policy, and encourages the belief that the WAD developments achieved during the Decade lead to no result. This chapter will therefore be led by the following research question: *What are the effects of the dominant way of implementing and evaluating WAD policy?* It is important to examine why the evaluations produce negative outcomes. The reports are merely an interpretation of certain data, which is recorded and measured in differing ways, facing obstacles along the way. Qian has conducted research into development cooperation evaluation reports, and has found that there are often problems of measurement and identification, resulting in diverging results that fail to take into account all factors. Projects are often measured by the goals that were set during its design.⁴ This way of measuring is narrow, as it dismisses other outcomes

1. Zinsser, "From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi," 142.

2. Kamerstukken II, *Actieprogramma Vrouwen en Ontwikkeling*.

3. *Women and development: policy and implementation in Netherlands development cooperation, 1985-1996*, in collab. with Netherlands. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. Inspectie Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Beleidsevaluatie, Evaluation report 1998 (The Hague: Policy / Operations Evaluation Dept., Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998).

4. Nancy Qian, "Making Progress on Foreign Aid," Publisher: Annual Reviews, *Annual Review of Eco-*

that may have resulted from the projects but were not anticipated. The negative narrative created through these reports has significant consequences, and has contributed to a decline in popularity of development cooperation in populations. Those consequences are currently felt in the Netherlands.⁵

In this chapter I will investigate the challenges of implementing and measuring policy and vouch for a new way of looking at the success level of policy that is more nuanced than the current narrative allows. In the first section of this chapter I will analyse the ways in which the interviewees view the implementation of policy: *Perspectives on implementation*. This will shed light on the varying perspectives on implementation that were held by those working in the field during the Decade.

In the next section, I will examine the reasons for the negative narrative in *Factors leading to the negative narrative around policy outcomes*. This section will be twofold: First, I will set out various elements to be taken into account when implementing policy. Next, I will examine the ways in which outcomes of policy are measured. In this section, I investigate to what extent the evaluations represent the outcomes of policy and point out the flaws in measurement methods which can lead to negative evaluation reports.

An important element in considering the implementation of policy is how it is perceived by countries affected by it. Therefore, I will investigate the role of African women in the WAD discussion and the ways in which they influenced changes in WAD discourse in the section: *Positions and viewpoints of African women during the UN Women's Conferences*. Investigating their role will also show whether policy was catered to implementation in this region. This affects the success of policies.

I have chosen to focus on the African continent for this research due to their large impact on the Decade and presence of women's movements. Where WAD thinking started out essentially Western-centric, their input has turned much development thinking into an African discourse. It is thus valuable to highlight their perspective and role when considering Western policy. It would also be valuable to conduct an analysis of other regions in order to highlight perspectives of women and women's groups from more regions in the Global South.

Lastly I will set out the ways in which I believe policy implementation should be interpreted and measured in the section: *What next?* I aim to present a counterdiscourse to the negative narrative and propose a more positive perspective on WAD policy and development cooperation as a whole. Links will be drawn to the current crisis in policy.

3.1 Perspectives on implementation

How is it possible that, despite the work of the Dutch WAD women to formulate policy aligned with the concerns of women from the Global South, policy evaluation reports show nothing to reflect this progress? Awori laughs at the question: "Sometimes we say nobody wants to get rid of poverty" She refers to those unwilling to create effective, progressive policy. She is critical of the Western-centric mindset many policy makers still seem to have. She also explains that the implementation of policy is not as easy as it may seem.⁶ Awori advocates for policy that focuses on the direct funding to women's groups as an effective WAD strategy: "It would matter a whole lot because the way money for development is organised now, it's just way out of reach of the rural women." She points out that the funding of large international NGOs often does not

nomics 7 (2015): 18, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/44860750>.

5. Malcontent, "Ontwikkelingssamenwerking 2.0," 16.

6. Awori, Semi-structured interview with author.

result in sufficient funds for local, grassroots organisations. The steps and procedures they have to follow leaves “only crumbs.”⁷

Traditionally, most funding goes to governments. One reason direct funding to women’s groups has not been done to a larger extent globally is because Western governments are afraid the money will not be well managed and fail to result in the impact the donors envision, to this Awori poses: “Funds given to women have been proven to have a direct positive impact on the well-being of their families. It is not fair that the least amount goes to those who do the most work.”⁸

Van Hussen recalls how she felt when the first IOB evaluation report on projects for women in agriculture was published: “And I thought well, if it is brought out in this way, you can forget about any government official wanting to be involved in this. Because it was so negative that so little had happened.”⁹ It was discouraging. But her and Helleman underline that they understood that it takes time for policy to become implemented. Others felt the same. Blankhart describes a delicate balance felt by policy makers and executors globally: “How do you get everyone on board? Make sure you’re not too far ahead of the curve, but still stay innovative, right? That’s a difficult task for here as well as over there.”¹⁰

Schrijvers is, as she was at the time, critical of the way policies were implemented. She emphasizes the need for local communities to be involved in projects. During her time conducting fieldwork in Sri Lanka, she wrote recommendations for Dutch WAD policy focused on Sri Lanka. These recommendations would be sent back to the Netherlands, incorporated into policy formulated there, and then implemented back in Sri Lanka. Schrijvers describes the inefficiency of this compared to the creation of projects in line with her recommendations by people on the ground: “Well of course that was a stupid and weird detour.”¹¹

3.2 Factors leading to the negative narrative around policy outcomes

Throughout the Decade, much research has been done on the implementation of WAD policy, globally, as well as specifically on Dutch policy. The results are not positive. At Copenhagen, research by the UN showed that the position of women in poverty globally had not improved, and in some cases even deteriorated.¹² Dutch policy documents continuously reiterate the gap between formulation and implementation of policy over the years.¹³

It can thus be stated that evaluation reports have created a certain narrative of development cooperation practices which stands in contrast to the developments made in policy formation over the Decade. This raises various questions about implementation and evaluation, mainly: What has prevented effective implementation of policy?, and who decides what factors are measured and what is deemed as ineffective? In this section I will outline certain elements to be considered in implementing and measuring implementation of WAD policy, as put forward by the interviewees as well as in research on policy evaluation.

7. Awori, Semi-structured interview with author.

8. Awori.

9. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author.

10. Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author.

11. Schrijvers, Semi-structured interview with author.

12. Parpart, “Women’s Rights and the Lagos Plan of Action,” 190.

13. Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, *Women in Kenya and the Netherlands Development Co-operation 1985-1995*, Google-Books-ID: WEOL0AEACAAJ (Policy / Operations Evaluation Department., 1998), 158–161; Kamerstukken II, *Actieprogramma Vrouwen en Ontwikkeling*.



PhotoScan by Google Photos

Figure 3.1: Van Hussen and Blankhart during a mission to identify WAD progress, India 1984. Blankhart personal archives.

Factors in implementation

Distance A significant factor that must be considered in implementation is the physical distance between policy formation in the Netherlands, and policy implementation on the African continent and other regions in the Global South. The formation of policy is in the end in the hands of the donor countries, making implementation dependent on executors at respective ministries, which has not always been effective. The Dutch initiative of instating sector specialists at embassies abroad helped, but since they were responsible for WAD across the board they were not able to dedicate their time entirely to implementation.¹⁴

Next to sector specialists, another proposed solution to bridge the distance is the direct funding to women's groups, as also posed by Awori. This would add to or replace funding through governments or international NGOs. The latter was the case at the start of the Decade, where most funding went to governments. Many groups in which African women were involved, such as DAWN, as well as UNIFEM at which Awori was active, started lobbying for more direct funding towards rural women and grassroots organisations.

Distance not only encompasses geographical distance, but also refers to cultural differences and the amount of people the policy needs to be passed through prior to implementation.¹⁵ These people all need to be in line on the same ideas and on board with WAD policy, which was a quickly changing paradigm of ideas throughout the Decade. Blankhart points to a lack of knowledge in aid recipient countries, the people who had the task of executing the policy. This was an issue on all levels, and she describes often having to communicate with male officials who had a lesser understanding of the subject matter.¹⁶ In order to find ways to go around this bureaucratic

14. Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, *Women in Kenya and the Netherlands Development Cooperation 1985-1995*, 58–60.

15. Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author.

16. Blankhart.

process, she reiterates Awori's argument for direct funding to women's groups. Blankhart was actively involved in Dutch direct funding during the 1980s and 1990s, made possible by their two-track policy.¹⁷¹⁸ Blankhart: "With money you could help women's organisations professionalise, and that accomplished a lot."¹⁹

Schrijvers received direct funding from the MFA to set up a project when she was in Sri Lanka. The project encompassed the providing of farmable land to women from landless families, a shared plot of land for them to work on in order to stimulate cooperation instead of competition among poor communities and be a source of income. She worked in close collaboration with local communities, and in this way created a concrete project that bypassed the bureaucratic processes and geographical distance that often poses a challenge to implementation.²⁰

Unwillingness The second factor is unwillingness by governments, actors, or (international) organs to contribute to furthering WAD policy. One of the ways in which this can be combated is through international organisation in combination with the power and skill of individual actors. In chapter two I outlined the actions of the Dutch WAD women to pressure the more conservative MDC's into adopting more progressive policies. Awori describes how UNIFEM used to have National Committees. Through this mechanism the aims and strategies of UNIFEM could be spread globally, and members of the committees were able to pressure their governments to enforce these changes.²¹ This meant women from various regions were connected, and it was through this mechanism that Awori was in contact with the Dutch WAD women. She distinctly remembers Pronk as showing the willingness necessary to create policy that could actually serve the people it was created for. "After that you had a wave of conservative governments coming in and they don't have much time to listen to all this."²²

This factor does not only apply to Western governments, but is present throughout the African continent as well. Awori describes that it was not so much active pushback from governments or men that they experienced, but a lack of cooperation. "They depend on women for their food, so they can't be obvious in their pushback."²³ Nzomo describes the denial of women's subordinate position by Kenya's government. Post Nairobi, the Kenyan government showed willingness to implement the FLS. However, that promise came with a warning that stated "not to talk about their rights, as all Kenyans have their rights but not to talk about them." They were also told that they "had little to complain about as they were adequately represented in various fields in the country." Moreover, president Daniel Moi²⁴ encouraged members of the delegations to the Conferences to keep to themselves what they had seen, and to resist spreading those ideas throughout the country.²⁵

Whereas pushback in Kenya stemmed from an active ignorance to the position of women, unwillingness by Western actors may result from lingering colonial relations. Awori refers to aid that imposes Western values onto other cultures: "We must acknowledge the dark side of Western aid. You [Western governments] want other cultures to emulate you totally. This weakens their

17. Two-track policy referring to one track dedicated to government funding and the other to direct funding

18. Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, *Women in Kenya and the Netherlands Development Cooperation 1985-1995*.

19. Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author.

20. Schrijvers, Semi-structured interview with author.

21. Awori, Semi-structured interview with author.

22. Awori.

23. Awori.

24. president from 1978-2002

25. Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, *Women in Kenya and the Netherlands Development Cooperation 1985-1995*, 38-39.

creativity and exposes them to dominance and exploitation by you.”²⁶ This attitude of superiority and paternalism prevents policy to be formulated that allows for development on the terms of countries themselves. However, Awori is positive that this trend is dissipating as women’s movements and voices from the Global South become increasingly present, acknowledged, and respected on the international stage.²⁷

Miscellaneous factors While governments can provide some support to women globally, there are many factors outside of their influence that may impact the disadvantaged position of women. Awori points to the private sector, a factor that is often neglected by governments. There is a large presence of multinational corporations and business on the African continent that exploit the labour of women.²⁸ The ability of their governments to control these corporations depends on the domestic political climate and strategy. More liberal countries, which include a large number of wealthy Western countries involved in development cooperation policy directed at Africa tend to avoid interfering with such companies.²⁹ This allows for the continuation of exploitation, limiting the chance for many women to escape poverty and working against the successful implementation of WAD policy.

This is one example of external factors contributing to the subordinate position of women in the Global South that are out of the control of development cooperation policy. Other factors such as climate change, natural disasters, or unforeseen technological advancements could also influence the position of women.

Methods of Measurement

The factors described above all impact the successful implementation of policy. However, the fact that there are obstacles does not mean WAD policy has amounted to nothing. Nevertheless, the narrative remains negative. The questions that remain thus pertain to the evaluation of implementation, and why it has been categorised as unsuccessful, even if these obstacles were addressed at various points in time.

The measuring of impact of WAD policy proves to be a difficult task. Quantitative research finds that there are often problems of measurement and identification in evaluation reports.³⁰ Wieringa, from the side of researching WAD policy, has been involved in the process of evaluating projects: “It is so hard to measure whether or not a project has been effective, you cannot measure it. We did try, but it’s almost impossible.” Often, when it does not seem like a project has helped women on paper, the situation is more nuanced than that. She describes how she was asked by Schrijvers to create an evaluation report for her farm in Sri Lanka.³¹ The government was planning to cut funding to the project, as it was conducted on a small scale and there did not seem to be any long-term results.³² On a large scale, one farm on the whole of Sri Lanka can, of course, not evoke a complete switch in the gendered division of labour in the country or break negative cycles of discrimination. Accordingly, Wieringa’s evaluation could not reflect a positive change. However, Wieringa found that this one farm did show women in the area that

26. Awori, Semi-structured interview with author.

27. Awori.

28. Achola O. Pala, “Definitions of Women and Development: An African Perspective,” Publisher: University of Chicago Press, *Signs* 3, no. 1 (1977): 11, accessed June 3, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/3173074>.

29. Ransom and Bain, “Gendering Agricultural Aid,” 51.

30. Qian, “Making Progress on Foreign Aid,” 18.

31. Wieringa, Semi-structured interview with author.

32. Schrijvers, Semi-structured interview with author.

it is possible to break from the gendered division of labour and find agency. The project stimulated participating and surrounding women to think differently. Moreover, Wieringa pointed out that students worldwide learn from the publications surrounding Schrijvers' project, which contributes to the spread and exchange of ideas worldwide.³³ In this way, the project did have an extended ripple effect. One that is unfortunately impossible to measure.

Just as with the Conferences, there is a strong focus on measuring official outcomes when evaluating policy implementation. However, outcomes of WAD policy implementation often do not align with the intended goals, leaving projects to be automatically categorised as failures.³⁴ Unintended outcomes could still be positive achievements, but they fall outside of the scope of measurement.

3.3 Positions and viewpoints of African women during the UN Women's Conferences

In this section, I will outline the role of African women within WAD paradigm shifts. By doing so I demonstrate positive developments that increase the chance for local communities to be involved in policy implementation. First and foremost, it must be acknowledged that there are 54 African countries with their own cultures and political climates. It is thus impossible to generalise one 'African response' or one 'African Woman.' I aim to avoid sweeping generalisations and draw conclusions from various women's groups and literature conducted on the topic by African women. Conclusions drawn in this chapter do not apply to all African countries, regions, women's groups, or individuals.

African women were already involved in WAD processes on a global level from the 1950s onwards.³⁵ Women's groups surfaced throughout the continent in the 1960s, independently from Western women's movements, and often rooted in the struggle for independence. The same goes for women's movements in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.³⁶ African women contributed significantly to the 1966 Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (DEDAW), the precursor of CEDAW. No Western countries were involved in this process. Within Africa, there was attention to the position of women in policy documents prior to the Decade as well. The UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) had put women at the centre of their analyses by 1966 and were implementing a prototype of WAD projects.³⁷ Furthermore, many African countries have non-discrimination clauses embedded in their constitutions, such as in Namibia, Malawi, and South Africa. The founding document of the African Union (AU) dictates that women be able to participate in equal numbers at all levels of the Union. These achievements were due to vigorous lobby for gender equality by African women.³⁸ They show how African countries have had a strong focus on the position of women early on. Nevertheless, there was a strong disconnect between women's rights in policy and women's rights in reality on the continent, a gap which still remains.³⁹

Concerning Mexico, African women were in less a fortunate position to exert influence on the proceedings of the Conference than those from the Global North, due to the geographical dis-

33. Wieringa, Semi-structured interview with author.

34. Qian, "Making Progress on Foreign Aid," 27–28.

35. Kilby, "From Women in Development to Gender Justice?," 88.

36. Tripp, "The Evolution of Transnational Feminisms," 59.

37. Kilby, "From Women in Development to Gender Justice?," 70.

38. Fareda Banda, "Women, Law and Human Rights in Southern Africa," Publisher: [Taylor & Francis, Ltd., *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32, no. 1 (2006): 22, accessed March 22, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/stable/25065064>.

39. Banda, 22–23.

tance and the dominant development paradigm being exclusively Western-centric. Nevertheless, they continued to be actively involved in international politics through preparation conferences and meetings across the continent. One example of an initiative by an African woman that stemmed from these meetings is that of Esther Ocloo, a Ghanaian entrepreneur. She proposed the idea of formalising local women's credit associations to help women access capital at a pre-conference seminar. This resulted in the establishment of the Women's World Banking in 1979, which still operates.⁴⁰

At the advent of the Mexico Conference African women were conducting research into the gendered division of labour and other gender-related data throughout the continent. This research was used by economists worldwide.⁴¹ For example, in 1975, the UNECA published a report on the position of women in various African countries, titled: *Women and National Development in African Countries: Some Profound Contradictions*. The report shows support for similar strategies discussed at Mexico, underlining the necessity for the participation of women in the development process. Furthermore, it provides an overview of the activities of women across the continent and underlines the activities of rural women. However, it finds that many women's organisations have a lack of 'self-assurance,' meaning the organisations do not 'carry the same strength' as men's organisations. The report states that this is because of women's lag in education, training, and other access to tools of modernisation as opposed to men.⁴² This confirms the conclusion that the position of women in most African countries remained subordinate to men, despite continuous and widespread activism for WAD developments.

Despite the research, activity, and involvement of African women in preparation for the Mexico Conference, it was largely Western and WID dominated. African scholars were among the most critical of the WID approach, with O. Pala posing: "One may well ask, 'integrating women into what development?'" She underlines that African women often already play active roles in the economy of their respective countries, thus already being 'integrated' into the process. The problem, according to her, lies in the economies being constricted in their efforts to flourish by the international economic system, which limits local autonomy.⁴³ The strategies coming out of the Conferences were thus unsuitable for African countries. This led to many African governments complying with the agreements made at the Conferences, such as the establishment of national machinery, only to fulfill the requirements. There is a lack of attention to the needs of local communities and solutions that are oriented to non-Western, dependent economies.⁴⁴ This sentiment is reiterated by Nzomo, who has conducted research on the impact of the Decade on women in Kenya. Unlike some other African countries, Kenya's postcolonial government was not concerned with women's position or rights on a policy level. Mexico forced them to acknowledge that women are an important part of the development process, however, no consecutive change to policy has been made.⁴⁵ They did establish a Women's Bureau in 1983, which was financially supported by the Netherlands. However, it was significantly underfunded and lost most of the funds in 1983 due to negative evaluations. The Netherlands stepped down as donor in 1985.⁴⁶

For African women, it was thus imperative to include economic factors when discussing

40. Tripp, "The Evolution of Transnational Feminisms," 67–68.

41. Tripp, 67.

42. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, *Women and national development in African countries : some profound contradictions*, Working paper, Accepted: 2018-12-28T06:55:20Z (1973), 65–66, accessed June 26, 2024, <https://repository.uneca.org/handle/10855/26626>.

43. Pala, "Definitions of Women and Development," 12.

44. Pala, 9–10.

45. Nzomo, "The Impact of the Women's Decade on Policies, Programs and Empowerment of Women in Kenya," 10–11.

46. Nzomo, 10.

WAD policy.⁴⁷ This diverged from the perspectives of many Western delegations at the first Conferences, who put forward strategies to improve equity, equality, and political participation. This difference in priority from the West was not only the case for Africa, but for the whole of the Global South. For example, the push for the NIEO in Mexico was echoed throughout the Global South. At Nairobi, the topic of women in war and conflict was raised by women from the same region: “Women from Guatemala, women from Sudan, women from Liberia, all these different women from all these different parts of the world were all talking about [it]. It was like a record.”⁴⁸

While Awori acknowledges the diverging priorities and resulting tensions between the Global North and South, she describes how they had never been overshadowing. She echoes the sentiment of the Dutch WAD women that the Conferences were a place to exchange ideas and network: “There’s a lot of learning that was taking place. And there’s a lot of feedback between both groups coming out of the conferences, and looking for new ideas and how to consolidate them and make them into something that would matter for women.”⁴⁹ She comments on the allegations of overbearing divides: “I don’t think there was so much tension, so to speak [...] between the African countries and the Western countries because [...] it’s hard for you to disagree with the need for women to have participation and equal rights. And African countries were not disagreeing with the West.”⁵⁰ This shows how the issue of different aims was more nuanced than the current literature makes it seem.

Lobbying for their cause at the Conferences was more complicated for African women, as they were underrepresented in their governments. Whereas women lobbying for WAD causes in the Netherlands were able to do so through the MFA, in many African countries women were united in women’s movements, and governments often did not align with their views.⁵¹ While these movements had been active in pushing their agendas on the international stage since the 1960s, they became more organised and politically skilled with time. During the Conferences, they had to come up with tactics to get their governments on board. Awori describes an instance she recalls at one of the Conferences: “Most times I would be in the in the member state meetings, in official meetings. And I would see people from [African women’s groups] outside the door. And they would be pushing the door. Literally pushing the doors trying to get in to that meeting. Pushing to be there to pass slips to their governments!”⁵² Awori sees symbolism in this occurrence, women had to continually push their governments to take WAD into consideration: “Symbolically, it has been a matter of pushing the door.” According to her, this is also why the topic of war and conflict was taken seriously at Nairobi: “it was coming from too many places to be ignored.”⁵³

African women thus lobbied for the WAD agenda with the same passion, knowledge, and drive as the Dutch WAD women. However, they had less opportunity to become involved in official policy making. Whereas the Dutch ‘Bookclub’ was facilitated in their endeavours by Pronk and other supportive MDC successors, African women’s movements did not receive the same support and were geographically removed from many centres of influence, such as the UN in New York. This made it harder for them to represent an equal counterweight against the overwhelming Western majority at the Conferences. Nevertheless, through perseverance they

47. Pala, “Definitions of Women and Development,” 12–13.

48. Awori, Semi-structured interview with author.

49. Awori.

50. Awori.

51. Nzomo, “The Impact of the Women’s Decade on Policies, Programs and Empowerment of Women in Kenya,” 9–10.

52. Awori, Semi-structured interview with author.

53. Awori.

found a way to influence policy without being at the table.⁵⁴

With the establishment of DAWN in 1984 women from the Global South were able to connect: connect with each other, connect with women from other parts of the world (such as Lycklama), and connect grassroots movements with official government policy, a pillar of DAWN's ideology. Moreover, Nairobi provided them with a platform to display their perspectives and ideas. Awori describes an instance at the NGO forum, the event parallel to the Conference, where "somebody remembered the rural women [...] before we knew it, there were truckloads of rural women that were brought in. All dressed up in their traditional attire [...] everybody wanted to take pictures with [them]!"⁵⁵ This news reached the official Conference and caused a double-sided wake up call. The rural women realised the conversations that were taking place and started to organise themselves even more. The women from Western parts of the world attending the Conference came face to face with the women they were trying to reach with their policy.



Figure 3.2: Young Kenyan women decked in tribal dress on the opening day of the Women's Conference, Nairobi 15 July 1995. UN Photo/Milton Grant (UN7770607), <https://media.un.org/photo/en/asset/oun7/oun7770607>.

Blankhart describes the admiration she felt for the skill of African women in international organisations, how they allowed each other to reach greater heights.⁵⁶ Schrijvers shares this sentiment and speaks of Mexico: "There was a whole delegation from West Africa and one woman made such a huge impression of strength on me. The power to verbalise what was wrong with their enormous voices coming out of their entire body. Compared to that women from Western Europe were like mere skittish birds."⁵⁷ Where African women were critical of Western aid, they were able to use international networks to support alignment of goals and strategies. Policy did not become immediately accustomed to the realities of countries in the Global South as African women's movements grew, but it did improve.

3.4 What next?

Last in this chapter, I reflect on the negative narrative that has been created about development cooperation - partly due to the ways in which evaluation is carried out - and pose a counterdis-

54. Awori.

55. Awori.

56. Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author.

57. Schrijvers, Semi-structured interview with author.

course. Because although progress has been made, the job is not yet done. Awori sees the WAD process in two phases: the first has been completed. Now, she argues, is the time for governments to come together to consider concrete ways to build upon the developments of the Decade and further the implementation of these ideas. She underlines that the process takes time.⁵⁸ The rapid shift in thinking set in motion during the Decade by the WAD women must be diffused globally. The developments of the Decade were ahead of their time, and the women involved were consequent and diligent in bringing them to light. Nevertheless, the process has only just gotten started.

Since the events of the Decade, development cooperation thinking has changed rapidly. Recent years have seen a shift from government based funding to an increase in the role of NGOs. The current political climate in many regions of the world increasingly veers to the radical-right, in which there is little space for intercontinental cooperation. The rise of social media has increased the scope for international networks, and has decreased the geographical distance between continents. It provides more opportunity for individuals, businesses, and groups from the Global South to develop on their own terms. The private sector has become more accessible to them, providing exciting new possibilities for sustainable, bottom-up developments. Upon attending the Start-up Night Africa in the Hague on the 11th of June, hosted by the MFA and NGO Lioness of Africa,⁵⁹ this has become even clearer to me. The NGO provides a platform for African women entrepreneurs, and brings them into contact with investors worldwide. I admired the intelligence, skill, and ambition of the women presenting their business. From gravity based water sanitation systems, to AI powered translation solutions, and innovative, sustainable farming practices, the women were creating solutions for the problems that they saw around them. Not for the problems that Western countries deemed important.

Development cooperation policy is more than often flawed and remains rooted in the Western-centric paradigm defined by colonial systems that the field grew out of. This needs to change. However, that is not to say this change is not already taking place, and that it has never been on the right track. The Dutch WAD women were on the right track during the Decade, sharing their open-minded vision, encouraging dialogue, and practicing self-reflection. More of this mindset is needed today to ensure those formulating development cooperation *listen* to those the policy is created for. Major financial cuts to development cooperation is not the answer. The Netherlands can, and has, played a significant role in improving the position of women worldwide.

It is easy to feel negative about the current developments surrounding WAD topics and the position of women worldwide, but there is continuity to be found. Van Hussen's daughter continues to advocate for women's rights at Women Equals Men (WO=MEN) (Partially funded by the Dutch government),⁶⁰ at which she contributes to furthering the equal rights agenda globally.⁶¹ Though taking on a different form, development cooperation remains an important tool to continue the WAD process that was ignited during the Decade.

Conclusion

In the last chapter of this thesis I have shown the effects and different aspects of the outcomes of WAD policy formulated during the Decade. Research has shown that many of the intended outcomes were not realised, and many policy makers have therefore become sceptical about such policies. However, I have demonstrated how this negative narrative stems from a certain

58. Awori, Semi-structured interview with author.

59. <https://www.lionessesofafrica.com/>

60. <https://www.wo-men.nl/>

61. Hussen and Helleman, Semi-structured interview with author; Blankhart, Semi-structured interview with author.

way of looking at and measuring the outcomes of the projects. Just as the Conferences are often evaluated by the official outputs and factors of atmosphere and bonds created between women are overlooked, the same way are similar factors overlooked when evaluating policy. The long-term large-scale way of measurement that focuses merely on intended outcomes is the crux of this narrative. There should be a stronger focus on factors that are intangible and cannot be measured, such as the change in mindset, awareness of agency, and empowerment of women participating in and observing Schrijvers' farm project in Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, I have outlined the role of African women and women's movements during the Decade. Although they were involved in WAD discourse early on, they faced different challenges from the Dutch WAD women. They had to find ways to pressure their governments and organise themselves to further their agenda. Their involvement and increased influence throughout the Decade paints a positive picture of the prospects of successful implementation. As they continued their lobby, policy became more accustomed to their circumstances and concerns. A stronger focus on agency, autonomy, and the involvement of local communities leads to more tailor-made projects to specific regions which increases the success rate of a project. This not only displays African women's significant role in influencing WAD paradigms, but their contribution to a more successful implementation of policy, as it gradually became more accommodating to local circumstances and influences.

Although there is valid criticism around the implementation of policy, as there are various factors that make it difficult to successfully execute formulated ideas, a new perspective shows that the WAD policy created during the Decade was not in vain.

Conclusion

Keeping the Ball Rolling

Examining the progression of WAD policy during the Decade from a combined perspective of history of ideas and development studies has proved profoundly interesting. The merge of the two theoretical frameworks in combination with an oral history approach has led to a positive interpretation of the proceedings of WAD ideas, which stands in contrast to the majority of academic studies on the events. The ten interviews I conducted have shed light on the lived experiences of those involved in Dutch policy development, contributing profound and valuable interpretations of the events of the Decade.

By tracking the development of ideas I have proved how those involved in the Decade have ushered in paradigm shifts, not only in WAD thinking but also in the broader field of development cooperation, and that these shifts must be seen as important outcomes of the Decade because of their far-reaching ripple effect. I have shown how particularly the Dutch WAD women, including those working in the field of official policy formulation, research, and NGOs, have made significant contributions to these shifts. My research focused on those working in the first two fields. The latter category suggests room for further research. I have shown that the Dutch WAD women contributed to the furthering of WAD policy with a specific approach globally, concerned with the perspectives of those from the Global South.

These conclusions were reached by tracing the progression of WAD ideas over the Decade. WAD thinking started out with the WID paradigm, defined by Western-centric development thinking rooted in the modernisation theory, and developed towards the more inclusive, outward looking GAD paradigm, which thoroughly questions power relations between men and women and vouches for a more context-specific strategy of WAD. The progression of these ideas is influenced by the interplay between WAD and development cooperation paradigms, which contributed to the momentum and accelerated progress during the Decade. More importantly, I have demonstrated how the progressions were caused by individual skills, agency, and networks.

In particular I have focused on the individual skill and network of the Dutch. This case study illustrates the potential of further research studying other countries in the same way. Partly due to Pronk's leadership, a determined group of women formed in the Netherlands. He facilitated the creation of WAD positions at the ministry and supported academic research into the position of women globally at Universities. The women shared a mutual goal and fostered strong bonds of camaraderie internally, characterised by the network *Vrouwenberaad*, which was influential in steering Dutch policy. Pronk's idealistic, outward looking vision on development cooperation focused on the concerns of women from the Global South was shared by this group, leading to an approach to WAD policy formation characterised by listening instead of telling, dialogue instead of imposing, and researching instead of preaching. This finding has been significant, as most historiographic debate on development cooperation created by Global North countries underlines a Western-centric perspective.

On the international stage, the Dutch women were able to spread this approach due to their frontrunner role in the WAD field. Through their lived experiences I have uncovered that the Conferences that marked the Decade were defined by informal atmospheres, which Dutch women contributed to, establishing similar bonds of camaraderie internationally. These bonds in turn fostered international cooperation, networks, and in some cases even friendships. Their frontrunner position allowed them to organise, attend, and speak at international conferences. Contact with the women their policy was aimed at in this way facilitated the progression of Dutch WAD policy.

The Conferences did not always lead to official agreements - for example, the Copenhagen PoA was not adopted by consensus - due to looming global events such as the Cold War and economic challenges, in combination with diverging aims from women from different world regions. However, I have proved that the Conferences still fostered the formation, exchange, and adjustment of ideas, because of the informal atmosphere and individual diplomatic skill. This pushed shifts in WAD thinking which must be viewed as valuable outcomes. Scholars have overlooked this important factor of the development of ideas in considering ways in which the 'success' of the Conferences can be measured. In this way I pose a compelling counter narrative to the one that currently exists in the academic sphere.

In the same light, I have proved that those interpreting implementation of policy also overlook important factors. The implementation of WAD policy is measured by intended large-scale, short-term impact. The reports that result from this method of measurement have created a negative narrative around WAD and development cooperation as a whole. Not only does this threaten the existence of such policy, it is also untrue. I have shown how the intangible, unquantifiable outcomes of WAD policy need to receive more attention. The empowerment of women and awareness of their agency has proven to be a powerful ripple effect, which continues over generations and veritably has a positive effect on the position of women. This angle illuminates the long-term potential of WAD policy.

I have reached other positive conclusions through the analysis of the role and perspectives of African women during the Decade. African women's movements played a significant role within the Decade, and including their experience has enhanced this research by providing a non-Dutch perspective on Western aid, thereby creating a more holistic picture of the formation and implementation of WAD policy. The combination of analysis of Global North and Global South perspectives is missing in literature on the Decade. As such, further research could be done placing the progression of Dutch WAD policy in 'conversation' with other Global South regions. In this research I have shown how African women's movement strengthened throughout the Decade and were provided a platform at the Nairobi Conference, which aided in spreading postcolonial ideas and amplifying their agenda's. This not only led to the inclusion of women into the process of development policy formation, but also further pushed a move away from Western-centric development thinking. I have therefore shown how their contributions have led to policy gradually becoming more accommodating to local circumstances and influence. Furthermore, investigating their interpretations of formation and implementation of policy contributes to a more nuanced view of Dutch policy.

Upon reflection on the current state of development cooperation in the Netherlands I have shown how there is a need for a more hopeful narrative which highlights the possibilities instead of the shortcomings of development cooperation, especially now. A few weeks ago Mirjam Vossen presented her booklet: *Voorbij de borrelpraat: feiten en fabels over ontwikkelingssamenwerking*,⁶² to members of government concerned with development cooperation. It aims to counter the dominant negative narrative by presenting the achievements of development cooperation over the past decades. With this thesis I aim to add to this positive new narrative;

62. Beyond the bar talk: Facts and Fables about development cooperation

the full abolishing of the budget for development cooperation would negate all possibility for positive North-South cooperation. By investigating the achievements of the WAD women during the Decade I have shown that an open perspective rooted in dialogue and listening is indeed possible. Further investigation into other decades of Dutch WAD thinking would provide more insights into the history of Dutch WAD progressions throughout history.

The unique theoretical framework I have used has made a significant contribution to the historiography of the UN Women's Decade, as it has uncovered a previously ignored, more positive angle. These conclusions would not have been reached through the use of, for example, development studies theory and a social sciences perspective. Furthermore, the interviews have provided a substantial addition to this approach. Therefore, this thesis also represents a significant contribution to the humanities development studies debate. Nevertheless, every interpretation of events is a subjective one, and further research into the events of the Decade from differing perspectives would contribute to a more manifold debate.

By using this framework I have shown how during the 1970s, the Dutch WAD women have undeniably and irrevocably set in motion a movement. I have unveiled that developments within WAD must not be seen as separate events, but as a larger, global process that is still taking place. This process takes the form of a ripple effect, which started with putting the WAD agenda on the map globally and imprinting WAD ideas in people's minds, gradually spreading over distance and time.

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Appendix A

Bio's of the Interviewees

Jan Pronk

Jan Pronk (1940) is a retired Dutch politician and diplomat of the Dutch labour party (PvdA). He studied economics in Rotterdam during which he as a political activist in the New Left movement. He was elected as a member of the House of Representatives in 1971 and became Minister for Development Cooperation in the Cabinet Den Uyl in 1973, a role in which he remained until 1977. In 1980 he took office as Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (1980). He returned as Minister for Development Cooperation in Cabinet Lubbers III in 1989, which he remained until 1998 when he was appointed as Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment. After his term he continued to be active in politics and was appointed as Special Envoy of the United Nations for the Earth Summit of 2002, and worked as distinguished professor of International Development at the International Institute of Social Studies . In 2004 he was nominated as the first Special Representative of the United Nations in Sudan, serving until 2006. He retired from politics at 66 and became a non-profit director, together with serving several state commissions and councils for the government. He holds the distinction as the second longest-serving cabinet member since 1850 with 17 years and 114 days.

Pronk continues to advocate for development cooperation, the environment, human rights, and social justice. He is actively involved in public affairs and has been vocal about the conflict in Palestine, advocating for cease-fire.

Joke Schrijvers

Joke Schrijvers (1944) studied cultural anthropology at the University of Leiden, at which she obtained her PhD in 1985. Afterwards she became associate professor at the Institute of Development Research at the University of Amsterdam, at which she became professor in 1991, retiring in 2002. After writing *Vrouwen op Weg* she founded the Centre for Women and Development (VENO), later centre for Women and Autonomy (VENA), with the same group of researchers. She attended the Mexico Conference as special advisor. From 1977 on she has conducted extensive research in Sri Lanka, focusing on gender relations and women's position in society.

She became chair of *LOVA*, a Dutch network of feminist anthropologists in 1995, of which she is an honorary member. She started writing poems in 1990, finding that it allowed her to convey a more convincing and illuminating image of reality than academic text. She has

published three collections since then, *Onderhuids* in 1991, *Niet vast te leggen* in 2012, and *Hier heb ik mij gepland* in 2018.

Thelma Awori

Thelma Awori (1943) is a Ugandan women's leader and retired Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations. She was born in Liberia and came to Uganda in 1965. She is the Honorary Consul of Liberia to Uganda. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts cum laude in Social Relations and Cultural Anthropology at Harvard University. At the University of California at Berkeley she studied Arts Adult Education and Humanistic Psychology, in which she obtained a Master of Arts. In 2006 she obtained a PhD from Columbia University in New York.

In 1990 she became Deputy Director at UNIFEM. Among other things, she also worked in the function of Chief of the Africa Section at UNIFEM, a Consultant at UNIFEM of the Netherlands, the United Nations Children's Fund, and she was the director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

Throughout her life she has been an advocate for feminism, gender equality, and women empowerment. She has more than forty years of experience in development policy analysis, program development, advocacy, and development financing. Dr Awori has won different awards including Women's eNews Leadership Award and the Africa-America Institute Distinguished Alumna Award. She is the Founding Chair and Co-president of the Sustainable Market Women's Fund Liberia, formerly Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, which has indirectly empowered over 15.000 market women in Liberia.

Susan Blankhart

Susan Blankhart has more than 34 years of experience working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She obtained her Master of Arts in Social Geography at the Free University of Amsterdam. She became Coordinator International Women's Affairs from 1987-1991. After which she fulfilled the roles of Deputy Director Gender and Development and Director Humanitarian Aid. From 1996-2002 she was Director Conflict Prevention, Human Rights, Good Governance and Humanitarian Aid. From 2002 on she served as ambassador in Sri Lanka, Costa Rica, Egypt, and Sudan successively.

Since her retirement, she has served on various boards and Supervisory Boards, including Plan International Netherlands, RNW-Media, Berendina Foundation, and Ref FM. She remains active in public affairs, advocating for development cooperation, gender equality, and human rights. She is part of a group of over fifty retired ambassadors advocating for the Dutch government to take a stance on the Israel Palestine conflict and demand a ceasefire.

Joke Swiebel

Joke Swiebel (1941) is a Dutch political scientist, former PvdA politician, and activist. She studied political science at the University of Amsterdam until 1972. From 1977 on she worked at various ministries as policy advisor on subjects of women's emancipation, human rights, and anti-discrimination. From 1988-1995 she chaired the Dutch delegation for the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Afterwards she became a member of the European Parliament until 2004. In this function she advocated for human rights, gay marriage, and further emancipation for homosexuals and lesbian women.

After her term in the European Parliament she became part of multiple supervisory boards, including Aim for Human Rights, Movisie, and board member and chair of the Association for Woman and Law Clara Wichmann. Earlier this year, in January 2024, she obtained her PhD at the University of Amsterdam, at 82 years old. It concerns the post-war history of homosexuality in the Netherlands.

Saskia Wieringa

Saskia Wieringa (1950) is retired professor and chair of Gender and Women's Same-Sex Relations Crossculturally at the University of Amsterdam. Since the late 1970s she has researched gender relations, gender indicators, and lesbian relations in Indonesia, Japan, and South Africa. She has contributed to the establishment of Women Studies at universities in various countries. She chairs the International People's Tribunal on the 1965 Crimes Against Humanity in Indonesia and co-organized the Tribunal on that topic, held in November 2015. She wrote and (co-) edited more than 30 books and over 200 articles. From 2005-2012 she was Director of the Atria Institute on gender equality and women's history in Amsterdam. For the Economic Commission of Africa she developed the African Gender and Development Index, which is still in use today.

Teresa Fogelberg

Teresa Fogelberg obtained her Master of Arts in anthropology and development studies at the University of Leiden. She became the first lecturer of Women's Studies from 1981-1983. When the university planned to abolish the function upon her leave to West Africa, she initiated a sit-in at the university which resulted in the withdrawal of the decision. She continued to conduct extensive research in West Africa where she developed early warning systems for famines. She fulfilled various management roles at, among others, the ministry of Foreign Affairs for thirteen years. Here she filled the role of chair of the department of Women and Development. During Pronk's time as Minister he named her as one of his three inspirations. In 2000, she became the leader of the department Climate Change at the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and the Environment. During the negotiations in Kyoto, Fogelberg was head of the Dutch delegation.

She serves on the board of various organisations such as WWF Netherlands, Cordaid, and IIED (the International Institute of Environment and Development). Additionally, she is Vice Chair of Worldconnectors and Affiliate Earth Charter International and Board member of the Impact Economy Foundation, among others. Furthermore, she is Co-Founder of the Global Reporting Initiative in the Netherlands.

Claudine Helleman

Claudine Helleman studied anthropology at the university of Leiden, where she was a part of a team of feminist anthropologists. She conducted extensive research in Indonesia. She returned to the Netherlands in 1974, when she joined Joke Schrijvers and others in researching and writing *Vrouwen op Weg*. After Mexico, the same group established the Centre for Women and Development (VENO) in Leiden, from which more research could be done on the position of women globally, financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Helleman became coordinator of the centre and continued to do research that would serve as support for policy. She also led the MFA funded research in Egypt. From the centre they organised workshops for members of the government

to become more knowledgeable about Women and Development Affairs. In total, she worked at the embassy in Indonesia for five years and has conducted research in various countries.

Jose van Hussen

Jose van Hussen studied sociology at the University of Leiden. Because of her husband's job at the United Nations she lived in Jordan from 1972-1975, during this time she worked with various local NGO's. After this they moved to Sudan where she had a job conducting research for a Dutch project on the position of women. Upon her return, she applied to become Coordinator of International Women's Affairs, along with Geertje Lycklama. She filled this position from 1980-1988. After her term, she became sector specialist in Indonesia. In 1997 she became the head of social policy division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until 2001

Ireen Dubel

Ireen Dubel (1956) studied at the Institute of Social Studies The Hague from 1980-1981, where she followed an Interdisciplinary Specialisation Women and Development. She obtained her Masters of Arts in 1983 at the University of Amsterdam in Human Geography, where she specialised in the region East and Southern Africa as well as Women's Studies. In 1984 she became a policy officer at the National Platform Population Politics, after which she became Program Coordinator of the Women and Development Training Program at the Institute of Social Studies. In 1988 she started her 28 year career at Hivos, starting as a regional program officer and later becoming senior policy officer and program manager of Gender, Women and Development and Senior Advisor Women's Rights. Furthermore, she is a general advisor of women and gender, at, among others the KIT and Mama Cash.

She continues to be actively engaged in feminist politics by linking social movements, action-research, development policies and practices. Currently, she is pursuing a PhD at the University of Amsterdam on the politics of feminist North-South policy engagement in the Netherlands from 1975 until recent.