BRIDGE development - gender | CUTTING EDGE PROGRAMMES

The Amnesty International Journey: Women and Human Rights
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May 2013

Introduction

This paper looks at Amnesty's efforts over 25 years to integrate women's rights into its work. It is based on a review of relevant literature and first hand interviews with human rights activists including those who have worked with Amnesty in the past, as well as some current staff. Our intent is to map the trajectory of Amnesty's engagement with women's rights and see which strategies worked and which didn't, looking for the possible insights these can offer to other organisations and movements strategically incorporating women's rights in their work.

Amnesty International (Amnesty or AI) was founded in 1961 to promote and protect human rights. Amnesty is made up of 3 million members and supporters who belong to approximately 75 national sections and structures. It is also a professional organisation with staff in 80 countries who research human rights abuses and campaign for human rights. An international secretariat (IS) of approximately 500 staff in London coordinates and leads research and campaigning. Amnesty is governed by an international board (IEC) elected by the members at the International Council Meeting (ICM). Amnesty then, is simultaneously a movement and a global and complex organisation. This paper will document changes in both the movement and the organisation. To do this, we will need to look at a little of Amnesty's history and its culture.

Amnesty International is widely acknowledged to be at the forefront of the international human rights movement. The genesis of Amnesty International lies in an article in the UK newspaper *The Observer* that British lawyer Peter Benenson wrote in outrage after hearing of two Portuguese students being imprisoned for raising a toast to 'freedom'. As responses to the article gathered steam, Benenson put forth an 'Appeal for Amnesty 1961' that became the foundation for both the movement and the organisation that is today Amnesty International, as well as the format (of the petition and appeal endorsed by people around the world) that is its political tool of choice. This "founding act" - the publication of a human rights abuse resulting in action by "ordinary people" around the

world - reflects the core organising principle of Amnesty. Amnesty members and supporters take 'action' of one kind or another on behalf of, and increasingly in partnership with, victims of human rights abuses.

For years, Amnesty's core mandate was the protection of rights of 'people imprisoned for their beliefs' with its logo, the candle, shining even as it is surrounded by a barbed wire, representing this attempt to imprison the human spirit. Most of Amnesty's actions were against the State (all governments were equally culpable) in defence of their chosen category of victim, the PoC ('prisoner of conscience'), persecuted for a disruptive role in national politics, or espousing certain beliefs that challenged the State or other key institutions.

The 1970s saw the beginnings of important work on torture, taking into account the larger picture, and making a conceptual shift in the way torture was understood. This came alongside the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which included an article on torture. In this period, human rights violations (essentially violations of political rights) in different countries were given most attention. We also saw greater attention to human rights instruments in this period in the UN, which may have contributed to AI's increased attention to human rights instruments, and their convergence with the broader human rights movement. Another important focus in the 1970s was the documentation of human rights abuses.[1]

International recognition came to Amnesty in 1977 as it won the Nobel Prize for its efforts at peace, and then again in 1978 with The UN Prize in the Field of Human Rights in recognition of its contribution to human rights. Even as the decade took the organisation to new heights, it sowed the seeds for many controversies as it provoked international opinion with its position on debatable issues, such as capital punishment, and the legitimacy of use of violence by prisoners of conscience. Amnesty raised eyebrows worldwide when Nelson Mandela's status as a PoC was refused because of his professed support to violent resistance even as it noted and campaigned against the bad prison conditions he had been placed in.

Taking up the cause of women's rights is only one of many ways Amnesty's work has changed over the years. The millennium began with a major conceptual shift: a stress on the indivisibility of rights, and a commitment to address the full range of human rights, including economic and social rights. This shift to a wider view of human rights

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[1] Author JK Rowling spoke movingly of her years at this time as an intern in the Amnesty international secretariat at her speech in 2008 Harvard Graduation See http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2008/06/text-of-j-k-rowling-speech/ for the full speech.

was also happening in the broader human rights movement.[2] Symbolic of this shift was Amnesty's Stop Violence Against Women (SVAW) campaign (2004-2010).

Amnesty's four seasons of women's rights work

Amnesty's engagement with women's rights can be seen as four seasons, beginning more than 25 years ago.

<u>Season one: Getting on the agenda</u>

The period following the UN Decade for Women 1975-1985, and the UN conferences in Mexico City and Nairobi, was a time of growing awareness of gender equality in development and human rights circles. Advocates within Amnesty and outside began pushing Amnesty to work on women's rights. Discussions were happening in national sections about women's rights and how they could be integrated into international conventions and other tools. These early discussions were influenced and supported by women's rights activists outside of Amnesty who provided important thinking, but at the same time there was mistrust by some staff and members who worried that Amnesty's impartiality and objectivity would be suspect if the agenda was influenced by a particular group (in this case, feminists). Activists from inside Amnesty needed to translate broad concerns for women's rights into culturally and organisationally appropriate language and thinking. The US section was influential in starting the Intersectional Women's Rights Network (IWRN) which was made up of larger northern sections. This network, although it had no formal standing in Amnesty, contributed to the pressure on the international secretariat to bring women's rights to their work.

An important step, then, was this dialogue of insiders and outsiders shaping the issue of women's rights into a form that Amnesty could incorporate into its ways of working as well as the pressure from inside and outside.

Also part of the cultural evolution was Amnesty's approval of the inclusion of homosexuality (imprisonment of persons on the basis of their sexual orientation) into the mandate at the ICM in 1991. This was important because not only was it related to sexuality, but it became a "theme", a focus on a particular set of people as opposed to a focus on violations themselves. All of this was happening in a context of a post-cold war redefinition of human rights (which had been shaped by the bipolar nature of cold war politics). All of these factors were leading Amnesty beyond a focus on political prisoners.

<u>Season two: Vienna, Beijing and the Women's Rights are Human Rights Campaign in the 1990s</u>

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[2] See Manjima Bhattacharjya (2013) *A Tale of Two Movements: How Women's Rights became Human Rights* http://socialmovements.bridge.ids.ac.uk/case-studies/human-rights

During this period, the Secretary General of Amnesty took a leading role in enunciating Amnesty's support for women's rights and preparing the organisation for the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

The prominence of women's rights in the declaration following the Vienna conference gave feminist activists a platform from which to challenge the rigid structure of human rights (as they were defined in Amnesty). This pressure was felt by senior management.

A landmark campaign (Women's Rights are a Human Right), report and book was launched by Amnesty in 1994.[3] However, this was done with considerable opposition from more conservative members of the IS who were concerned that women's rights activists were trying to highjack Amnesty's voice. This highlights an important part of Amnesty's culture at that time, in which it was understood that one of the requirements of "impartiality" was to be very careful not to be associated with other groups whose agenda might cast Amnesty's "objectivity" in doubt. Amnesty believed that its credibility depended on its independence, a very careful circumscription of what it commented on (within the mandate) and that those comments were fact-based.

This careful attitude persisted, as can be seen from a senior researcher quoted in Stephen Hopgood's book[4] as saying, "...I see us being very pragmatic and saying, look, whatever you think about abortion, this woman in Nepal has been locked up for twenty years and here is the background to her case."

The value of "universality" was also invoked by staff and members who felt that human rights were for everyone and that by focusing on women, Amnesty was violating the idea of universality that was such an important part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

What is interesting here is that Amnesty was not prepared to accept a formulation of women's rights from the outside. It needed to enunciate those rights in its own terms.

Also important to note is that Amnesty chose not to have a "gender desk" at this stage. It had, for part of the time, two senior staff focused on women's rights. One was working on women's rights campaigning, the other on research, the two key axes of Amnesty's work. There was a gender forum made up of IS staff who were pushing for more work on women's rights. Also, the recently formally recognised IWRN was given liaison status with the IEC.

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[3] Amnesty International (1994) *Women's Rights are a Human Right*, London: Amnesty International
[4] Stephen Hopgood (2006), *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International*, Cornell University Press

Even as this period marked a season of "heated debates" within the organisation, these debates were less on the relevance of including women's rights, and more on whether the mandate needed to be expanded or not. Other currents were flowing in this period, which were to have an impact on what Amnesty felt it should be working on: the anti-globalisation protests in the global north, for example, which had drawn young people in (leading to diminishing interest in Amnesty's campaigns) but in which Amnesty's role was marginal.

Perhaps it was the belief that expanding the mandate to include the full territory of human rights would lead to an expansion in membership, that working on ESCR would draw more members from the global south (the common belief being that these were the more appealing issues in the south), or that it would allow for a more robust body of work; the point was that the decision to work on a global campaign on violence against women was rooted not only in a desire to work on VAW, but also as a first step in working on economic, social and cultural rights. The opposition to this also was not necessarily a misogynistic response at the time, but more to the broadened mandate, the feeling that Amnesty was entering waters it did not have enough expertise in, and that the reasons for doing such work were not clear, or as a former member we spoke to told us, that "Amnesty was not being honest with itself, as to why it was doing this campaign".

Women's rights therefore became the peg around which some of these debates – long due, nonetheless – took place. Substantive debates did also take place at a less heated level, including whether focusing on 'women's rights' would dilute the agenda of Amnesty, or whether, as some women within the organisation argued, it was something they had to do or else run the risk of becoming 'irrelevant' to the outside world, especially the international women's movement, who had observed that Amnesty had not responded quickly enough to the tidal waves created by Vienna and Beijing. One of the organisers of the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights that coordinated much of women's participation in the Vienna conference told us, "It took Amnesty International ten years since Vienna until they committed to create a special desk on women's rights. Ten years to set up the desk. So there has been slowness and resistance." This delay in action seemed inexplicable to most activists on the ground, and this perception of AI coming 'late to the table' would persist even when, with the best of intentions, it tried to put a spotlight on women's rights in the massive global campaign that was to follow in the coming decade.

Toward the end of this period, in 2000 a women's rights advocate who had been a leader in the Australian section became Deputy Secretary General (SG). In 2001, AI appointed its first woman SG. While a female SG was probably an important symbolic act, her appointment was not seen as particularly important for work on women's rights.

Season three: The SVAW Campaign

The Stop Violence Against Women Campaign was a real departure for Amnesty - it was new subject matter, it was a six year campaign (longer than ever before), it was a global campaign that all sections would participate in, and finally, it required working in partnerships with other organisations (an important departure for Amnesty in its mode of working). The campaign was intended to decrease violence against women but it was also intended to change Amnesty's approach to women's rights. A total of 64 reports were produced over the course of the campaign. Reports included research on domestic violence and due diligence, sexual violence in conflict and post conflict, trafficking and women's human rights defenders. It was up to regional teams to decide on research, so some regional teams did far more than others.

The evaluation of the SVAW campaign highlighted a number of accomplishments, noting that it "did lead and contribute to changes in attitudes awareness, policy and law in many countries".[5] It did not, however, make women's rights part of the movement or normal organisational functioning.

It is important to realise that at the beginning of the SVAW campaign Amnesty had policies, a gender unit, a gender action plan and considerable work on women's rights, but the work was uneven at best. Some sections were quite strong and there were important voices within the IS, but women's rights were not an organisational priority, nor was there an organisational infrastructure in place to ensure gender-related work across the movement. The hope that the SVAW campaign would change that was unrealised.

The evaluation pointed to a number of organisational problems with the campaign but an important issue identified in our interviews was that the SG demanded that regional teams produce research for the campaign and the measure of their success was quantity not quality or connection to a strategy.

As a former staffer told us, "If there were achievements in the SVAW campaign, they were despite the organisational problems". Some of this was attributed to the "the lack of tools and no clear guidance to programme managers on how to do gender."

In spite of these issues, there was a lot of activity during this period, both in the IS and in some sections (some more than others). New and stellar work – both research and local campaigns - was done on gender by some of the sections. Amongst these are the facilitation of a network in Kenya and a coalition in the UK of activists who could come together and actively lobby and negotiate with the governments to put VAW on the agendas in their regions; innovative use of the concept of "due diligence" across many

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[5] Tina Wallace and Helen Banos Smith (2010), *Review of the SVAW Campaign*, London, Amnesty International

of the regions (obligations of states in protecting women from violence, and state responsibilities around non state actors when it came to VAW); important attention to ways of collecting medical evidence in cases of rape and safe treatment to survivors of VAW; a focus on institutional safety for a new group, adolescent girls, in the Safe Schools campaign; the building of an understanding and action plan for defending women's human rights defenders with the Individuals at Risk team within Amnesty; and critically, widespread work on justice for women survivors of violence, highlighting the lack of implementation of laws on VAW in different countries, and exploring how to enable their implementation.[6]

Amnesty also did important work on international conflict and post-conflict and justice work, namely the focus on UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820, and ratification and implementation of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (including gender-responsive law reform in line with the Rome Statute at national level).

Evaluation of the SVAW campaign highlighted a number of accomplishments:

- The achievements of the SVAW campaign are significant. The work of the SVAW campaign did lead and contribute to changes in attitudes, awareness, policy and law in many countries. The extent of changes and the external impact of AI's work globally were hard to assess, due to limitations in monitoring and evaluation. Due to the global size and scale of the campaign involving not only AI members but other activists and partner organisations, it was challenging to fully know what had been done where, by whom, and what changes were made, in order to get a comprehensive picture of AI's influence.

- The review found a range of examples of the adoption of laws and policies to protect women from violence and defend their rights.

- The review found examples of changes beneficial to women survivors of violence.

- At some times and in some places AI's good access to media, its authority and weight did reinforce the importance of VAW as a human rights issue. AI raised the profile of VAW in several countries, in policy forums and enabled other organisations working on these issues - who are often not heard - to speak out, amplifying the concerns being raised by women's and local human rights activists.

- Lobbying work in several countries and strong membership engagement increased awareness. Questionnaires indicated that an increase in public awareness of AI as

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[6] Of course, these accomplishments built on and depended on work that women's groups had been doing for decades.

an actor on VAW was the most common achievement, followed by influencing government policy.

- AI built up its credibility as a VAW actor. For example, AI Sweden has become a strong actor/agent in the Swedish context, working now with a range of partners and activist organisations. They are often invited to speak and participate in a wide range of VAW forums.

- Several sections and structures reported a rise in active membership; in Latin America as well as within countries of the global north. Sections saw VAW as a key issue, highly motivating and relevant, and wanted to continue working on it, building on existing momentum. The SVAW campaign generated a great deal of activity; many members in the global north found this an important issue and several sections said the SVAW work was popular with their members, after some initial resistance was overcome.

The SVAW campaign was a high visibility one, and drew on Amnesty's strategies to use popular culture and communication methods, mobilising famous persons to endorse the basic message. Many of the problems with the campaign, or the non successes, were more to do with process[7] than the actual subject matter itself – although Amnesty's lack of previous work on the subject matter was also an issue to consider.

However, outside of some sections or small teams within the IS working on the SVAW campaign, the rest of Amnesty remained untouched by the conceptual framework of gender. Staff members who had come in with some prior knowledge or expertise on women's rights were able to make slightly more headway, but the organisation was not hiring staff with the idea in mind that a gender perspective could be an important criteria for selection (except for the gender unit). The gender unit remained small, with a high turnover of SVAW staff in the IS and in some sections (though not, for example, in UK which had a strong SVAW programme running), but even in the best case scenario, the UK section felt "under resourced and unclear"[8] in what they were expected to achieve.

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[7] For example, Amnesty was unused to working with partners – something that was crucial to the success of a campaign on violence against women; it was not used to doing WOOC (work on own country) and did not have the organisational knowledge of how to connect this with campaigns and networks on the ground who could use this research. The campaign was composed of multiple projects on multiple themes with multiple objectives in multiple contexts, and combined with the complex organisational structure of Amnesty. This made it quite a complex web; the campaign came 'from the top', and not from the needs of those working on the ground. Mostly, it was a time-bound campaign – even though six years is a long time to run a campaign, it is ambitious if the campaign is to stop violence against women.

[8] Tina Wallace and Helen Banos Smith (2010), *Review of the SVAW Campaign*, London, Amnesty International

The campaign mobilised large amounts of energy on women's rights but did not change the organisation itself; it did not make "women's rights part of Amnesty's DNA".[9] This was indicated best by the next campaign - Demand Dignity - which focused on global poverty. The initial materials for this campaign did not include a gender perspective and did not sufficiently include a women's rights perspective. The SVAW evaluation report foreshadowed the difficulty of this by describing how some men and women were actively resistant to the SVAW campaign.

Toward the end of the campaign (2009), the ICM adopted a new strategic plan (the ISP) which prioritised gender mainstreaming and called upon the International Board to ensure sufficient resources for its implementation. This was an effort to make women's rights a key part of the work across the movement. Yet, in the global priority statement and the global operational plan that followed, gender mainstreaming was barely visible.

The SVAW evaluation marked an important learning moment for Amnesty. Not only did the evaluation exercise (one that other human rights organisations can certainly learn from) prove to be reflective and honest, for those looking in from the outside, the feminist take of the evaluators and their critical eye indicated a genuine interest within Amnesty in doing things differently. As one of those interviewed by the evaluators of the SVAW campaign said, "The window has been opened, now we need to step into the garden."[10]

Even though the evaluation indicated that Amnesty had in some ways, burnt its fingers with the ambitious SVAW campaign, there were also many things that were achieved in the period, and could be built on.

Season four: Post SVAW

Toward the end of the campaign (2009), the International Council meeting adopted a new strategic plan which prioritised gender mainstreaming and called upon the International Board to ensure sufficient resources for its implementation. The board also committed to follow up on the recommendations of the SVAW evaluation. The IS management response to the SVAW evaluation included the following points:

• Gender was made a global cross-cutting priority for 2010-2016. All global campaign strategies are to be informed by gender analysis so that the campaigns also address gender issues.

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[9] Ibid
[10] Ibid

- The gender unit was expanded to a gender, sexuality and identity (GSI) programme intended to play the role of providing expert advice to all research and campaign teams.
- The research support unit will continue to ensure that training on gender is provided for AI researchers, and gender will be integrated into capacity building projects for campaigners.
- A new international women's human rights network was created and is being strengthened.
- A gender and diversity taskforce of the International Executive Committee was working to produce a second edition of the gender action plan, focusing on barriers to implementation as well as a road map to diversity for the AI movement.
- Consideration would be made on how to avoid raising expectations that AI will be able to cover all issues of women's rights. Good internal communication would be needed on how AI plans to progressively integrate gender into its work, and on the message that addressing gender is a responsibility for all staff, not just the GSI unit and women's rights specialists.
- Key performance indicators would be developed on gender work, and a process for strategic priority setting would take place to identify those projects/themes where gender integration is a top priority.[11]

Although it is beyond the capacity of this case study to evaluate all these initiatives, it is fair to say that the gender action plan (GAP) that was developed by the gender and diversity task force was quite inadequate and there seems to have been little progress internationally, although many individual sections are doing good women's rights work. The IWRN does not have decision making power and meets infrequently. It shouldn't be counted upon to lead this effort. Gender mainstreaming went from priority in the strategic plan to barely visible in the operational plan.

On the other hand, the gender sexuality and identity programme is up and running with a current staff of 8.5 people. They are enthusiastic about the work they are doing and report a growing openness to their assistance on the part of researchers and campaigners.

However, this change (from gender unit to gender, sexuality and identity programme) and new demands (building a road map to diversity) compounds the existing complexity of the organisation, already a 'complex creature' with complicated ways of decision making and hierarchies, perceived by many women's groups to be "deeply patriarchal in

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[11] Amnesty International (2011) *International Secretariat Management Response to the Review of the Stop Violence Against Women Campaign*, UK: Amnesty International

how they run the organisation".[12] So the GSI programme will be facing an uphill struggle.[13]

One indication of the troubled place that women's rights holds within Amnesty was a public breakdown of the relationship between senior management and a staff member who had led the gender unit for almost a decade. The point of controversy was, at the face of it, Amnesty's decision to put on a public platform or endorse publicly a survivor of torture at Guantanamo Bay (Moazamm Begg) who was also allegedly affiliated with violent, fundamentalist groups. The question posed by the objecting staff member was: how could Amnesty associate itself with a person or group who was self-admittedly against fundamental rights of women and sexual minorities? This concern was echoed later by other women's rights practitioners: "How can Amnesty International work with somebody who says women can't have equal rights within the family or homosexuality should be criminalised?"[14] Many women's rights activists came together to write a global petition to Amnesty demanding that the "integrity of human rights be restored". Over 1500 people signed the petition, including many notable human rights activists.[15] One of the human rights defenders who initiated the petition told us, "People always sell out on women's rights. That's not unusual. But when an organisation like AI does it, we feel that we have enough of an equation with them to demand accountability".[16] Amnesty commissioned an outside inquiry which found that AI had done proper research to justify adopting Begg as a prisoner of conscience while in Guantanamo, but didn't do sufficient follow-up as the partnership developed with him and his organisation. The report pointed to a variety of ways Amnesty needed to improve its processes for working with partners.[17] This incident made it amply clear that there are serious differences between the broader human rights movement and Amnesty on important aspects of women's rights.

The question was not only about accountability. At the heart of the matter was a question about whether human rights organisations leaning towards a left liberal discourse were overly sympathetic of Muslim fundamentalist groups in the post 9/11 environment without enough value being given to their actions in people's lives. Often it was women's rights that were compromised by these groups, and so it was pertinent

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[12] Interview participant, 2012
[13] It should be noted that it is not the GSIP's exclusive mandate to make the GAP happen. It is widely understood that it is the task of a broad range of actors at the IS and in the sections.
[14] Interview participant, 2012
[15] www.human-rights-for-all.org/spip.php?article44
[16] Interview participant, 2013
[17] Mindy Sawhney and Ravindran Daniel (2010), *Working with Others: An independent Review, Findings and Recommendations,* Amnesty International
 http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ORG10/006/2010/en/b819a750-dd0e-48a3-b0a3-0a2ce83030e1/org100062010en.pdf

that these are the questions raised by women's rights groups. A co-petitioner told us that:

"It was not the first time it had happened. AI in the 1990s had already been lining up to defend right wing activists, calling them prisoners of conscience. Like the Jamaat in Bangladesh. AI has a fat mandate to work on arbitrary detention, it's their 'core issue' to appeal for the release of an arrested man. Everyone has right to freedom of arbitrary detention but to call someone a prisoner of conscience? No! They are an active member of the Jamaat which actively espouses violence against women and discrimination against them. It's a matter of location perhaps...Active members of AI are from the global north, not battling Jamaat on the streets."[18]

Amnesty would say that it can defend a person unlawfully detained without agreeing with his/her ideology, but this reasoned stance can be unsatisfying for activists outside (and sometimes inside) Amnesty.

Not all would agree with the way the controversy played out, but many would feel that there is a conversation there that needs to be had: "Sometimes human rights organisations in the global arena want to sensationalise things – have stories, heroes, and it can be difficult to resist those pressures….But we have to do due diligence ourselves within the work we do."[19]

Again, 'women's rights' is only a symptom of a larger malaise or peg around which other tensions appear to rise to the surface. This post SVAW phase is characterised by tensions within and between social movements, so it is not unusual to have a contested terrain. These debates can even be helpful in working towards a real application of indivisibility of rights, moving beyond seeing the international human rights arena as a space of political negotiation and compromise, and making rights matter on the ground.

At the same time, there were some bright lights in this period; good work on sexual and reproductive rights, maternal mortality, and abortion rights in Nicaragua, for example. Many national sections have built strong women's rights programmes. For example, a recent activist survey in Canada ranked women's rights and individuals at risk as the two issues people most wanted to work on. The movement as a whole strongly endorsed work on women's rights at the 2009 ICM.

Another encouraging sign is that good people are being attracted to Amnesty; internally there is a belief that there is room to do good work on women's rights.

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[18] Interview participant, 2012
[19] Ibid.

What has changed?

Looking at the period of approximately 25 years, it is possible to say that there has been significant change in Amnesty's "take up" of women's human rights. Evidence includes the volume of work undertaken over the last 20 years; the SVAW campaign and its accomplishments; the inclusion of gender mainstreaming as a priority in the ISP; the policy and activism work on some difficult issues including abortion; work on Women's Human Rights Defenders and the growing capacity for research on women's rights in local situations (WOOC projects) such as the Stolen Sisters project in Canada. There is a feeling in many quarters that women's rights cannot be ignored; they need to be part of organisational thinking about human rights. Women have been and are in senior positions of leadership in the international movement. New partnerships with women's groups have been developed and Amnesty has a place of some respect in the international women's movement.

Unfortunately Amnesty doesn't keep track of resources spent specifically on women's rights, but our observation is that resources allocated to women's rights have increased (primarily research and campaigning time on women's rights issues such as maternal mortality and women in slums, women, peace and security, reproductive rights, women in the Middle East). The gender, sexuality and identity unit has gone from a staff of three to its current level of 8.5. We would also say that the intellectual capital regarding women's human rights (written reports, strategies, policies) has increased significantly. Judging from ICM discussions and the work of the gender, sexuality and identity unit, there has also been change in the capacity and commitment of individual staff and members and leaders.

What has not changed?

What has shown less change are the organisational dynamics that we believe are important for sustainable and strong work on women's rights.

These organisational dynamics can be seen in three interacting categories:

1. *Resources*
   There was insufficient training during and leading up to the SVAW campaign, and post SVAW resources for organisational change and learning in the broader movement regarding women's rights have been light. The management response to the

evaluation of the SVAW campaign promised training and support for staff. We are not aware of a significant increase in training in the past two years.

2. *Consciousness change*
   Although there was considerable change through the 90s and during the SVAW campaign, the evaluation of the SVAW campaign still found that staff members at the IS were ambivalent about the importance of the campaign. In 2010, some staff still did not see the need to learn about or incorporate women's rights in their work.[20]

3. *Organisational culture*
   Many practitioners believe that a supportive organisational culture is essential for sustained, well-resourced and exemplary work on women's rights. A supportive culture would include the following:

   - A widespread understanding that women experience human rights abuses differently (some they experience uniquely) and that all research and campaigning needs to recognise this.
   - A broader organisational culture that is less "macho" - more inclined to work in partnership, allow that other conceptions of research methodologies may have merit, and that other qualities of relationship with partners, other NGOs and sections are also possible.
   - Women's rights considerations are present in all campaigns - for example, should the organisation be working with partners whose own women's rights credentials and records are questionable?
   - Broad support for institutional mechanisms such as a requirement that women's rights become part of the approval process alongside other criteria for judging human rights research and campaigns.
   - Routine (and valued) use of women's rights specialists working with country research teams.

According to our analysis, none of these cultural traits are strongly present at the IS, although there has been some progress over the past 20 years, in particular in the area of partnerships. Some sections have made considerable cultural progress. Some would argue that the volume of work done on women's human rights would indicate cultural change, but the prioritisation of women's rights after SVAW would lead us to say that more work is needed. At the same time it is important to state that Amnesty, like all large (particularly membership) organisations, is far from easy to change in any direction.

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[20] Tina Wallace, Helen Banos Smith (2010), *A Synthesis of the Learning from the Stop Violence Against Women Campaign, 2004-10*, Amnesty International.

The table below sums up some of the key factors leading to or blocking these changes:

Factors Pushing Change	Factors Blocking Change
The environment created by the Decade for Women and the Nairobi conference	Resistance to change of any sort—silo style functioning, fear, self-censorship, poor communications, etc.
The openness inspired by the post-cold war re-thinking of human rights and space to think through how women's rights can be incorporated into AI's work	Power blocs within the IS who wish to maintain their resources and view of how to work on human rights
Pressure from women's rights activists	A culture of argumentation ("convince me") as opposed to an openness to learning
Pressure from sections and advocates within the IS	Traditionalists who believe that AI should be focused on political and civil rights
Support of leadership, for example, Pierre Sane, former Secretary General and Derek Evans, former Deputy SG	Insufficient effort on political, cultural and organisational change
Women in leadership in the movement	Confusion about dealing with non State actors, and hurdles posed by culture and religion.

How are we to understand change and non-change?

Some years ago, Noel Tichy proposed a framework for understanding change that required attention to a twisted rope of technical, cultural and political issues.[21] In this case, Amnesty has invested considerable effort over many years in the technical problem of how to work on women's rights. From the debates of the early 90s through to Vienna and Beijing and then the SVAW campaign, there was significant focus on questions such as: what are women's rights, how do they fit into existing conventions, what kind of research is required, what kind of partnerships, what issues are amenable to what outcomes using what strategies?

Amnesty has invested less in cultural change activities leading to the type of culture

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[21] Noel Tichy (1983) *Managing Strategic Change*, Wiley

described above. In fact, we are not aware of any sustained cultural change activities related to women's rights in Amnesty other than a process underway in AI UK.

Similarly, there has been little attention to political strategies for implementing change. There seems to be an assumption that if the ICM can agree on a priority the staff will go away and implement it. Yet, we know that:

* New work must fit into existing priorities and these priorities also have champions.
* The new work (such as SVAW) enters a force field of powerful actors who will defend their mandates, resources, decision-making power and their understanding of human rights and how best to defend them.
* Although Amnesty is a hierarchy in many ways, there are still multiple power centres difficult to be brought into alignment even by a powerful chief executive.
* The many organisational changes of the past 10 years (including the current crisis at the IS) have also deprived women's rights of the board and management oversight needed.

The above formulation can be used to enrich the Gender at Work framework on understanding change.[22] The following diagram (Figure 1 below) shows the four interrelated clusters of changes that need to be made as an organisation becomes more committed and capable of working on women's human rights.
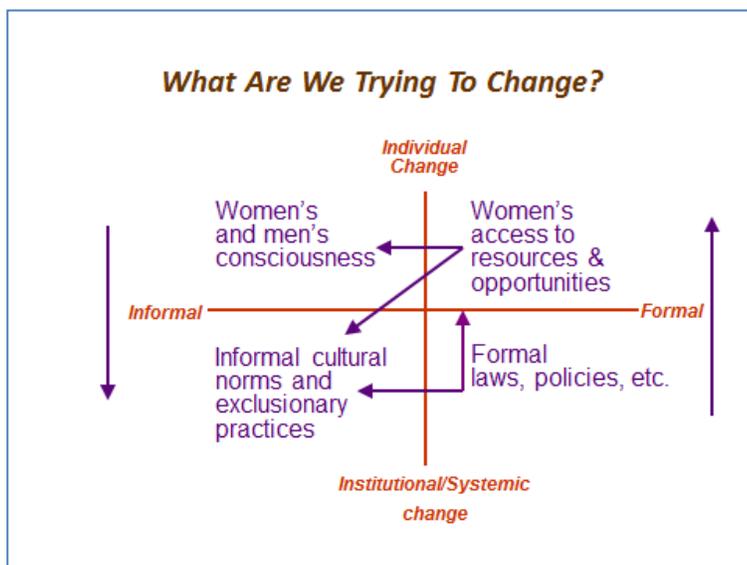
The top two clusters are changes in individual conditions (resources for gender work, access to management positions and other powerful locations, gender consciousness and commitment to change toward gender equality). The bottom two clusters are systemic. The cluster on the right is of formal institutional policies, strategies and plans. The cluster on the left is the informal norms and cultural practices that maintain inequality in everyday practices.

Figure 1: The Gender at Work approach to understanding change

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[22] Aruna Rao and David Kelleher, *What Is Gender at Work's Approach to Gender Equality and Institutional Change?,* www.genderatwork.org

Change in one quadrant is related to change in the others. Exclusionary norms and discriminatory aspects of culture are like the unconscious of individuals. The 'deep structure' of formal organisations is largely unexamined, but constrains some behaviour and makes other behaviour more likely.

For example, the kind of consciousness change in the top left hand quadrant includes not only attitudinal change of movement members and leaders, managers and staff but also knowledge of how specifically to apply these new ideas to their work at the desk level.

The Amnesty case reinforces our belief in the need for holistic change strategies that respond to all four quadrants of the framework. In particular, it helps us understand the early rungs of the change in the bottom left quadrant. In this case the starting point was translating the thinking of the one movement (feminism) into the language and understanding of the Amnesty movement. In Amnesty that meant a variety of debates, including one as to whether domestic violence was torture. In a movement culture ruled by legal definitions, serious work on legal analysis was a very necessary beginning to cultural understanding.

The case also helps us understand the bottom right quadrant and the importance of the real detailed, street by street, work of operational planning, training, performance management, helping people learn how to work, day to day in new ways.

Conclusion

Looking at Amnesty's journey over almost 25 years a number of findings emerge. First, there has been considerable progress over these years in bringing women's rights to the work of the movement and the organisation. However, progress has been variable at the IS and in different sections. The "movement", as represented by its membership, has recently endorsed strong policy for women's rights and many sections are strongly supportive of this work. Organisationally, progress has been strong in some sections, and although the IS has been slow to see women's rights as a priority there are encouraging signs.

An important understanding has emerged about the difference between a broad women's rights agenda that might be advocated by the women's movement and the more narrow agenda adopted by Amnesty. For example, Amnesty has campaigned against the criminalisation of abortion but not for freedom of choice. These decisions are rooted in Amnesty's legalistic culture and practice and also reflect the difficulty of building consensus in a diverse global movement. It is unrealistic for the women's

movement to expect Amnesty to simply adopt the women's agenda. Instead what has been needed is a long process of discussion as to how and in what terms Amnesty would work on women's rights. We hope that discussion continues.

Finally, this case has highlighted the need for a multi-faceted and continuous change strategy - pressure from activists (inside and out), support from key leaders, spaces for discussion and learning, policy and organisational process, political action and managerial leadership. It has also highlighted how such key factors as management support, board leadership, and inclusion in the strategic plan are far from enough to ensure change.

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The authors gratefully acknowledge the insights of Sunila Abeyesekara, Edna Aquino, Roger Clark, Azmina Dhrodia, Derek Evans, Meenakshi Ganguly, Bob Goodfellow, Sara Hossain, Cheryl Hotchkiss, Kate McInturf, Lindsay Mossman, Vijay Nagaraj Pia Oberoi, Gita Sahgal, Joanne Sandler and Stephanie Schlitt

We are particularly grateful to Roger Clark, Azmina Dhrodia, Bob Goodfellow, Jenny Birchall, Jessica Horn, Joanne Sandler, and Stephanie Schlitt who reviewed the manuscript and helped us with important clarifications.

This case study was developed as part of the BRIDGE *Cutting Edge* programme on gender and social movements. Find out more here: http://socialmovements.bridge.ids.ac.uk