The University of Sydney

'TARGETING WOMEN AS AGENTS OF (CLIMATE) CHANGE: A HUMAN RIGHTS BASED APPROACH'

by

Kathleen Seewald

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Human Rights

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

October 2011

Research Question:

How might ActionAid Australia best establish a presence in Melanesia in the area of women's rights and climate change, and how should this presence be informed by the human rights based approach to development?

It is the purpose of this paper to examine how the non-governmental development organisation ActionAid Australia (AAA) might best establish a presence in the Pacific Island nations of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, in the area of women's rights and climate change. This examination will be explicitly informed by two key frameworks. The first of these will be the human rights based approach to development (HRBA). The HRBA is a development paradigm and normative philosophy which explains poverty as a phenomenon that is directly caused by structural inequities within and between societies, as well as by direct violations of fundamental human rights (Uvin, 2004). A review of the current academic literature on the HRBA will offer the analysis a firm theoretical grounding, and will ultimately inform the conclusions made in the final sections of the paper.

The second framework through which suitable intervention strategies will be analysed is the organisation's own mission and goals, particularly as are extrapolated within the Draft Strategic Plan 2012-2017 (Version 1.2). The Plan highlights the desire for AAA to maintain a focus on women, and in particular on women's access to resources and decision-making processes, as a central facet of its work (ActionAid Australia 2011:4). An examination of suitable intervention strategies available to AAA in their future possible engagement in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Solomon Islands (SI) should be explicitly informed by such strategic planning documents, as well as by mission statements and organisational goals, in order to ensure that all programme design and implementation falls within the organisation's mandate, and indeed serves to help it achieve that mandate.

Following the analysis of AAA's organisational mission and goals, and its engagement with the HRBA, the paper will turn to an examination of two relevant case studies. Each case study will involve practical intervention by an NGO employing the HRBA, in the area of women's rights and climate change. This will serve to illuminate already-established best practice in intervention strategy. The first of these will be ActionAid Bangladesh's study on women's rights and climate change in Bangladesh, and the organisation's programme of intervention; the second will be the establishment of CARE International's Community Adaptation Learning Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Having comparatively analysed these two different approaches to rights-based community engagement in the area of women's rights and climate change, the paper will then evaluate the initial findings to have emerged from the data produced by AAA's current research into women's rights and climate change in PNG and SI. These findings will be crucial in developing recommendations for AAA's future engagement in the region, as the HRBA framework consistently emphasises the importance of tailoring development programmes to specific local needs, thereby avoiding an essentialising, reductionist 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

This will lead into a critical analysis, drawing upon both the academic literature and on the two HRBA case studies, of the most appropriate methods of engaging in-country in the area of women's rights and climate change. This critical analysis will attempt to cogently examine which programmes of intervention and/or engagement constitute current best practice in this relatively new area of focus for development agencies. This section will additionally seek to recommend appropriate and sustainable avenues for AAA in their future engagement with PNG and SI, in the area of women's rights and climate change.

The Human Rights Based Approach to Poverty Eradication, or HRBA, is a philosophically and axiologically informed development paradigm which explains poverty as a result of the inaccessibility or denial of fundamental human rights. As explained by former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, the HRBA should be understood as 'a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to protecting and promoting human rights. The rights-based approach integrates the norms, standards and principles of the human rights system into plans, policies and processes of development' (Robinson 2005:38). For this reason, organisations adopting the HRBA—including ActionAid, CARE, Oxfam and Save the Children—aim to explicitly inform the strategic and methodological approach to all programme implementation by the paradigm. For, as Uvin (2004:16) explains, an HRBA must focus not only on measurable outcomes, but equally on the process through which such development outcomes are pursued.

Further, through the HRBA, a vision is constructed of what *ought* to be, providing a normative framework to orient development cooperation. This brings an ethical and moral dimension to development assistance, and provides a stronger basis for citizens to make claims on their states and for holding duty bearers to account, enhancing the access of their citizens to the realisation of their rights (Hausermann, 1998). Emphasis, therefore, is placed on challenging embedded structures or barriers—be they economic, social or cultural in nature—which systematically preclude individuals from effectively gaining access to their rights. Thus, the HRBA is also firmly linked to the empowerment framework: 'Fundamentally, a human rights approach to poverty is about empowerment of the poor... provided the poor are able to access and enjoy them, human rights can help to equalize the distribution and exercise of power both within and between societies' (Hunt et al 2004:14).

The notion of human rights and development as being compatible and mutually reenforceable in a practical sense, is one that has emerged gradually and with some contention. Indeed, as Uvin explains, 'until recently, the development enterprise lived in splendid isolation from the human rights world' (2004:1). Tomasevski highlighted this visible partition at the time, articulating that 'development and human rights work constitute two distinct areas, where development is devoted to the promotion of economic growth and the satisfaction of basic human needs, while human rights work exposes abuses of power' (1989:68). Some have even recently argued that human rights have little place in development strategies, and that the HRBA is but 'the latest designer item to be seen to be wearing' (Cornwall & Nyambu-Musembi 2004:1415). Nonetheless, as we have seen, the rise in the authority and prevalence of the HRBA to development demonstrates a 'new way forward' for both development and rights practitioners, in its emphasis on incorporating and interrelating both paradigms in practice (Uvin 2004:19).

So what has led to this junction of two previously segregated fields of practice? It appears that numerous factors over a considerable period have given way to the development of the HRBA. The first of these must include the perceived failure of the traditional 'welfare-based approach,' and increasing disillusionment with the authority of growth-oriented, economically based models of development, typically grounded in neoliberalism (Mousseau, 2005). The works of Amartya Sen (1981, 1987, 1999) were pivotal in shifting development discourse away from exclusive ideas of economic growth, to broader notions of capacity building and access to rights (1999:4). The idea conveyed in Sen's opening sentence to his seminal work '*Development as Freedom,*' that 'development can be seen… as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy' (1999:3), is one which remains fundamental to current conceptualisations of the HRBA.

A number of other actors, fora and mechanisms have been critical in establishing and advancing the HRBA over the past several decades. At each of the World Conferences on Human Rights, it was articulated that seeking to ensure the mutuality of development and human rights endeavours is crucial (Robinson, 2005). Indeed, even at the first of these Conferences, held in Tehran in 1968, it was affirmed that 'the achievement of lasting progress in the implementation of human rights is dependent upon sound and effective national and international policies of economic and social development' (see Moskowitz 1974:19). The creation of such international mechanisms as the 1986 Right to Development and the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action further linked notions of human rights and democratisation with ones of social justice and development.

This process of interrelation was greatly facilitated by the collapse of the Soviet Union; this development meant that increasingly throughout the 1990s, Civil and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights—once divided due to their ideological connotations—could now be strategically integrated (Kapoor 2010:6).

To this end, in 1997, then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan issued a comprehensive reform agenda, in which he called for human rights norms to be mainstreamed and embedded throughout all facets of the UN structure (A/51/950). This subsequently meant that the United Nations as an organisation would greater reflect fundamental human rights principles and normative philosophy in practice. With regard to the mainstreaming of human rights into development-related mechanisms, the UN has explained that 'human rights and human development share a common vision and a common purpose—to secure the freedom, well-being and dignity of all people everywhere. When human development and human rights advance together, they reinforce one another—expanding people's capabilities and protecting their rights and fundamental freedoms' (UNDOCO 2007:7).

In 2003, the UN made clear its determination to further prioritise the development of the HRBA across all its functions, organs and mechanisms, through the establishment of a *Statement of Common Understanding.* This Statement now explicitly informs the HRBA applied to all development programming by UN agencies, and is summarised as follows:

1. All programmes of development co-operation, policies and technical assistance should further the realisation of human rights as laid down in the UDHR and other international human rights instruments.

2. Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the UDHR and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the programming process.

3. Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of 'duty-bearers' to meet their obligations and/or of 'rights-holders' to claim their rights (UNDOCO 2007).

As well as informing UN strategy and programme operationalisation, the HRBA has also had enormous impact on increasing numbers of non-governmental development organisations seeking to more effectively implement targeted strategies of intervention. However, while these organisations each claim to espouse 'the HRBA' as their key axiological and methodological ideology, their individual conceptualisations of how the HRBA can actually be defined can vary significantly. 'While the approaches taken by international agencies have some 'family resemblances', there are fewer commonalities than talk of a singular 'rights-based approach' might warrant. Rather, there are plural rights-based approaches, with different starting points and rather different implications for development practice.' (Cornwall & Nyamu-Musembi 2004: 1416). Varying emphases on, say, first or second generation rights, or on empowerment frameworks, or collective action, can shape the distinct form of any individual organisation's own HRBA.

This paper will now turn to an analysis of ActionAid Australia (AAA) and *its* particular understanding of and approach to the HRBA, as well as an examination of its organisational goals and mission. These goals will be primarily extrapolated from the AAA's Draft Strategy Paper (Version 1.2), which is currently under review, and due for publication in early November 2011.

AAA's decision to explicitly inform all programme design and operationalisation by the HRBA is aligned with the practice of ActionAid International (AAI). Indeed, AAI have shown forthrightness and determination in their thorough implementation of the HRBA into all areas of organisational strategy for almost a decade. This has afforded them status as one of the 'ground-breakers,' of HRBA-focused INGOs, having embedded the paradigm into their organisational ideology considerably early on. A preliminary AAI HRBA conceptual paper was developed throughout 2007, within which key components of programming and policy work to align with HRBA principles were identified (AAI, 2009). Interrelated and concurrent programmes of empowerment; programmes of solidarity-building amongst collectives of rights-holders; and programmes of targeted campaigning and advocacy, were identified as ideal operationalisational methods under an AAI HRBA (AAI, 2007).

In 2008, a comprehensive HRBA Manual was published, offering a detailed explanation of AAI's particular normative and methodological approach to poverty eradication, including how the term HRBA is interpreted and how it is used in the context of the organisation's work (AAI 2008:1). It details that AAI's approach 'places as much emphasis on how we go about our work—the process we follow, as what we aim to achieve—the outcome' (AAI 2008:2). This manual was followed in 2009 by the publication of a document detailing the *core minimum activities* involved in the realisation and operationalisation of AAI's own HRBA.

This document outlines a framework comprised of five key programmatic methods or elements, and explains 'our programming should have interventions related to each of these elements, or at least have a strategy that will build towards each of them' (ActionAid International 2009:3). These elements are listed below:

1) Rights – Power Analysis: Strategies and/or activities to include on-going analysis and understanding of the situation related to power relations among key constituencies and players, including rights-holders and duty bearers;

2) Agency of the poor and excluded: Strategies and/or activities that ensure that rights-holders articulate their agenda, demand and take action to claim their rights;

3) Women's Rights: Strategies and/or activities to ensure women identify and contest different forms of subordination and exploitation;

4) Poor and excluded people critically engage with duty bearers: Strategies and/or activities to enable poor and excluded people to connect with and claim from or challenge duty bearers, especially the state;

5) Changing the rules: Strategies and/or activities to achieve lasting gains by tackling the structural causes of poverty and violation or denial of rights.

ActionAid Australia's approach to poverty eradication and development is strategically aligned with that of the broader AAI HRBA, as has been outlined above. Thoroughly explicated in AAA's Draft Strategy Paper, entitled 'Justice Through Rights,' are the organisation's vision, mission, and values, which will now be briefly examined. Firstly, three core mission objectives are identified within the Strategy:

1) Enable poor and excluded people, particularly women, to secure access to, and control over, the productive resources, and decision making processes essential to improving their livelihoods.

2) Protect women's rights by preventing and responding to violence against women during disasters and conflicts.

3) Encourage Australians to challenge the status quo and critically evaluate how their lives and choices affect people living in poverty by tapping into positive values, beliefs and attitudes. (ActionAid Australia 2011:3).

Similarly, the Mission of AAA is 'to work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice' (ActionAid Australia 2011:4).

Particular emphasis is placed by AAA on women, who are identified as key agents of change: 'ActionAid Australia puts women's rights at the centre of all of our work. This is because women are both the most vulnerable social group and the most effective agents of change' (ActionAid Australia 2011:6). Attention is effectively drawn to the fact that women have been traditionally excluded from centres of power and decision-making; to be a woman is—universally—to be subject to entrenched forms of discrimination and unequal power relations. For AAA, their HRBA should 'call for action to address the unequal power relations that cement the status of women as inferior human beings' (ActionAid Australia 2011:6). Patriarchy is thus one of the key structural barriers identified within AAA's HRBA which must be overcome, if lasting change in the realm of social justice and equity is to be achieved and sustained.

This normative understanding of the negative and oppressive influence of patriarchy explains why, in late 2010, AAA and AAI elected to fund a research project on climate change and women in Melanesia. The purpose of this research is twofold: 'to assess the capacity of women in Melanesia to claim their rights in the face of climate change and to assess opportunities for ActionAid to support women in this process' (ActionAid Australia 2011b:1). The research is being conducted within the human rights framework, and is explicitly informed by AAA's HRBA. As such, rights—particularly those relating to aspects of human security—are currently being explored to identify issues experienced by women in the Pacific region, and how these issues are being exacerbated by the imminent impacts of climate change. The forthcoming outputs of the research include a detailed report documenting the key findings of the research, and an internal scoping report highlighting various options for AAA's future engagement in the Pacific region (ActionAid Australia 2011b:1).

AAA, were it to initiate such an engagement with women and climate change in Melanesia, has various avenues at its disposal through which the potential operationalisation of the HRBA in this area could be effectively realised. Though still considered a fairly 'cutting edge' area of both research and intervention, several organisations have now already established programmes targeting women's rights and climate change from an HRBA. While none of these programmes are currently based in the Pacific, a critical analysis of their particular targeted intervention strategies may serve to illuminate what is emerging from the field as current best practice in this area. This report will now turn to a brief examination of two specific programs operated by organisations employing the HRBA, in the area of women's rights and climate change.

Case Study 1: CARE International's Adaptation Learning Programmes

CARE International (CARE) has been employing the HRBA for the best part of a decade, since early 2002 (CARE 2002:39). Sharing a likeness with AAA, the adoption of an explicit strategy for dealing with social injustice and human rights interrelatedly has had wide-ranging implications not only for *what* CARE does but also for *how* it does it. A particular feature of CARE's HRBA model is that the organisation considers itself one of the 'duty-bearers' of which rights-holders, particularly those in their targeted communities, can make demands. This positions the organisation as a player *within* the social and political spectrum of each community, rather than conceptualising themselves as being somehow outside agents (CARE 2002:45).

In recent years, CARE have focused greatly on community-based adaptation (CBA) schemes, with a consistent focus on the targeting of women and girl children as agents of change. This gendered approach is explicated in their 2009 Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis Handbook, where it is asserted that the success of development initiatives must begin with an understanding of the differences in adaptive capacity between men and women, and the design of adaptation strategies that ensure equal access to resources, rights and opportunities (CARE International 2009:8).

This is because 'it is increasingly recognised that women may be more vulnerable to climate impacts than men for a variety of reasons' (CARE International 2009:8). Such reasons include that, on average, women are poorer and typically lack secure access to the resources needed for adaptation. Additionally, women in countries most at-risk to the threats posed by climate change, including Sub-Saharan Africa, rarely have an equal say in decision-making in households, communities or in national politics. Despite this, CARE explain that 'these women are central to permanently improving the lives of their families and communities, and therefore must play a pivotal role in community-based adaptation initiatives' (CARE International 2009:8).

Based on the successes of their already-established CBA programmes, CARE last year embarked upon the establishment of a programme tailored to the specific needs of Sub-Saharan African nations grappling with the imminent effects of climate change: The Adaptation Learning Programme (ALP). Working in partnership with local civil society and government institutions, the ALP is currently established in forty separate communities across Sub-Saharan Africa, including communities in Ghana, Niger, Mozambique and Kenya. Supported primarily by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID), the ALP's overarching goal is to increase the capacity of vulnerable households and communities in Sub-Saharan Africa to adapt to climate variability, through capacity building and the exchange of knowledges (CARE International, 2011:4).

Towards this end, the ALP develops and applies innovative approaches to its pre-established CBAs to generate best practice models; empowers local communities and individuals to have a voice in decision-making on adaptation; and influences national, regional and international adaptation policies and plans, as learnings from the programme are shared with policymakers and adaptation practitioners across Africa and globally.

The ALP builds on CARE's 'people-centred approach to adaptation,' which combines successful strategies from 'decades of development experience' with scientific knowledge on climate change (CARE International, 2011). According to CARE, and distinctly reflective of the HRBA, advocacy and social mobilisation to overcome the underlying causes of vulnerability are key elements of the strategy. The approach also recognises the importance of an enabling political environment, thus emphasising engagement with local and national governance to facilitate local action. To this end, 'CARE partners with local stakeholders to facilitate a participatory and inclusive approach to local planning, in particular to ensure that the views of poor women and other marginalised people are incorporated into key decisions related to adaptation.'

Importantly, and in line with the HRBA, CARE acknowledges that while many experiences of the effects of climate change are identical—rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, extreme weather conditions—each target community holds a unique set of characteristics in terms of livelihoods strategies, access to resources and services, opportunities for diversification of livelihoods, and local governance processes and structures. Such local specificities must be explicitly recognised, and programme design and implementation be adjusted accordingly, as such a tailoring of programmes to specific local needs is necessary to avoid an essentialising, reductionist 'one-size-fits-all' approach to development (Singh, 2009).

A key stated aim of CARE's ALP is to demonstrate models of best practice for CBA that can be scaled up and replicated across a range of climate and socio-economic contexts: 'The programme will use learning networks and other innovative approaches to disseminate these models. A key outcome of the programme will be adoption of these best practices by civil society and government institutions across Africa and globally' (CARE International, 2011).

Case Study 2: ActionAid Bangladesh's Research and CBA, Bangladesh

The 2010 action research report produced by ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB), *'Understanding climate change from below, addressing barriers from above: Practical experience and learning from a community-based adaptation project in Bangladesh,'* analyses the strengths and weaknesses of community mobilisation activities for climate change adaptation in three areas of rural and peri-urban Bangladesh. Its aim is 'to bridge the gap between theory and practice' by examining the progress of a CBA programme established two years prior to the research project (Raihan et. al. 2010:5). This CBA programme, now in its second phase, had been established both to address the immediate needs of the local rights-holders, while also building their self-reliance, thereby ensuring the future sustainability of their livelihoods (Raihan et. al, 2010).

The report effectively communicates the local practical experiences and learnings from the CBA intervention programme, making sure to incorporate local people's analyses of their own vulnerability as related to climate change. Indeed, a great deal of emphasis is placed within the report—as within the CBA programme itself—on 'traditional' indigenous knowledge and practices: 'Rural people are the experts; they have a wealth of knowledge of local conditions' (Raihan et. al. 2010:6).

As well as this, there is the explanation of climate change as just one negative feature of an existing local social and economic reality, comprised of a multitude of phenomena including acute environmental degradation, increasing overpopulation and rapid urbanisation, and poor governance of resources. Climate change, while a problem in itself, is interconnecting with and exacerbating existing problems and vulnerabilities, placing additional strain on already poor, socially excluded and disadvantaged peoples. Thus, 'the effects of climate change are highly contextual; they intensify existing problems and create new problems, but always within an existing local reality' (Raihan et. al. 2010:17).

Because the effects of climate change are indeed highly contextual, the report asserts that all community-based initiatives must build on a discerning and comprehensive analysis of how the effects of climate change are experienced locally, and draw on local people's knowledge. This is analogous with CARE's approach of adjusting programme design and implementation to best suit local specificities and needs, and incorporating adaptation mechanisms based on local 'traditional' knowledge.

However, while coping mechanisms to deal with different hazards already exist, climate change has added a new dimension to existing problems and vulnerabilities (Raihan et. al. 2010:18). For, due to increasing and unpredictable changes in weather patterns, soil quality and other factors attributable to climate change, some important forms of local knowledge and practice are no longer effective. Adaptation must therefore also be based on technical and scientific knowledge about climate change and the newest adaptation measures.

Indeed, the report emphasises the triangulation of various types of knowledge from various sources in developing CBA intervention strategies: 'three types of knowledge are important in dealing with community-based adaptation: local knowledge, scientific knowledge and knowledge about rights. Together, these types of knowledge can empower people to take collective action' (Raihan et. al. 2010:17). This last sentence exhibits two distinct facets attributable to an HRBA to climate change adaptation. As we know, the HRBA is firmly linked to the empowerment framework: 'Fundamentally, a human rights approach to poverty is about empowerment of the poor... human rights can help to equalize the distribution and exercise of power both within and between societies' (Hunt et al 2004:14). Secondly, as outlined within ActionAid International's 2007 HRBA conceptual paper, a key component of programming and policy work should be 'programmes of solidarity-building amongst collectives of rights-holders' (ActionAid International, 2007).

To this end, the AAB CBA intervention seeks to strategically foster capacity for collective action. A 'people's research process' has been incorporated into the CBA programme, which enables people to move from their own, individual experience to collective, systematised knowledge: 'Physical space was created by building a house in each village where teams could gather for regular meetings to share information, discuss problems and come up with solutions. The houses are also used to disseminate scientific knowledge about climate change and adaptation' (Raihan et. al. 2010:34).

As we have learned, one of AAI's core minimum standards as established in 2009, is that programmes should enable poor and excluded people to critically engage with and claim from duty bearers (ActionAid International 2009:3). AAB have effectively implemented this core minimum standard of operationalisation by informing local people of their rights, and of the appropriate channels to go through in order to claim these rights. 'Through the project, villagers realised the power of knowledge and the power of numbers when talking to the authorities. One person can easily be ignored, but it is harder to ignore 25 people from a people's research team or even a whole village' (Raihan et. al. 2010). Thus, the AAI HRBA principles of collective action amongst rights-holders, and critical engagement with duty bearers have, in combination with one another, proven effective in allowing local people to gain better access to their rights in the communities of targeted CBA intervention programmes.

A further example within the report of ActionAid Bangladesh's incorporation of the HRBA into its CBA programmes in Bangladesh, is the emphasis upon campaigning for rich countries to pay their 'climate debt' (Raihan et. al. 2010:74). This notion of advocacy and global-level campaigning ties in with the third key component of AAI HRBA integration (targeted programmes of campaigning and advocacy), as well as the fifth of the core minimum standards (changing the rules to achieve lasting gains).

This essay, having now outlined each of the case studies, will seek to critically analyse the approach taken by each organisation in relation to fulfilling their objectives under their HRBA. Firstly, the prominence of women as the key agents of change—and therefore the key targeted demographic in development programmes—was clearly evident in each study: 'Women are central to permanently improving the lives of their families and communities, and therefore must play a pivotal role in community-based adaptation initiatives' (CARE International 2009:8). This is reflective of the HRBA, which for both organisations has meant a visible process of mainstreaming gender issues (see CARE 2002:6, ActionAid Bangladesh 2010:80).

Additionally, the 'empowerment approach' is particularly evident in AAB's project, which focuses greatly on increasing the capacity of rights-holders to make claims on duty-bearers. This was primarily achieved through the project's fostering of capacity for collective action. The 'people's research process' sought to enable people to move from their own individual experience to collective, systematised knowledge (ActionAid Bangladesh 2010:35). This collective in turn greatly increased the weight of their claims put to government officials and other duty-bearers.

CARE's ALP in Sub-Saharan Africa also makes reference to frameworks of empowerment, however a key difference in their employment of their approach stems from the fact that, unlike ActionAid, CARE still draw significant distinction between challenging underlying causes of inequality (civil/political action) and building the capacity of women farmers (economic/social action): 'While awareness of major gaps in the enjoyment of human rights may, in some cases, lead us to focus on new programmatic areas (such as women's political participation), our 'core business' will remain the advancement of livelihood security—or economic and social rights' (CARE 2008:4). Contrastingly, ActionAid would likely argue that increasing women's political participation will, in turn, precipitate the advancement of livelihood security.

For example, as Magalhaes Matsinhe, Programme Coordinator for CARE Mozambique, explains: 'There are many things we are doing to empower women farmers, and help them adapt to the negative impacts of climate change. For instance, CARE is teaching farmers to cover their crops so that more moisture will be retained in the soil and they won't be scorched by the sun. This reduces the crops' need for water, which is important since droughts are lasting longer and longer now' (CARE, 2011). While this is indeed reflective of an HRBA-informed empowerment approach, as it builds capacity and self-reliance, it does not seek to combat the structural inequities that may be preventing rights-holders from—for example—accessing from duty-bearers appropriate equipment with which to cover their crops, or accessing ample enough lands on which to grow and maintain their crops. This reflects again the differing emphases on first and second generation rights by each organisation.

A third consideration reflective of the HRBA prevalent within both projects is that of participatory engagement. This involves ensuring that the assessment, analysis, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation are deliberately participatory, and may be viewed as an attempt to move away from top-down, welfare-style development paradigms of the past (Mousseau, 2005). While CARE maintain that 'not only is it right for the people whose lives and livelihoods are directly at stake to set the agenda; it is also beneficial to CARE,' (CARE 2008:3). ActionAid Bangladesh similarly explain the advantages of rights holder participation: 'The participatory approach used in the project has given villagers a sense of owning and sharing problems, and also given them the confidence to choose different solutions. They are not just recipients of aid. They are responsible citizens finding solutions to the problems they face and claiming their rights' (ActionAid Bangladesh 2010:35).

Lastly, the HRBA emphasis on tailoring projects and programmes to specific local settings has been effectively implemented by both parties. Local knowledge has been integrated, enriching each project and increasing local ownership and participation.

Each of these HRBA elements, carefully and deliberately integrated into the adaptation programmes of the respective organisations, provide useful tools for any organisation seeking to establish a field presence in the area of women's rights and climate change. Their incorporation of the empowerment approach and of participatory development, and their considerations of local specificities and of women's roles and challenges, are all transferrable elements which together arguably comprise current best practice in the area of women's rights and climate change.

This essay will now analyse the current research project being conducted by AAA on climate change and women in PNG and SI, in light of all that has been discussed with regard to the HRBA, and will seek to illuminate what considerations need to be made throughout both project design and implementation.

Firstly, the essay discussed the particular features of an AAI/AAA HRBA, as extrapolated throughout such key documents as the Core Minimum Activities for an HRBA (ActionAid International, 2009) and the Draft Strategy Paper (Version 1.2), entitled *Justice Through Rights* (ActionAid Australia, 2011). An examination of suitable intervention strategies available to AAA in their future possible engagement in PNG should be explicitly informed by such strategic planning documents, as well as by mission statements and organisational goals, in order to ensure that all programme design and implementation falls within the organisation's mandate, and indeed serves to help it achieve that mandate. It is found that the aims of such a programme of intervention itself—building women's capacity to combat climate change and access their rights—do fit *wholly* within the mandate of AAA, as is outlined in the above documents. Education and vocational training of women food producers and the fostering of capacity for collective action through programmes of solidarity-building amongst rights-holders are particularly representative of the types of empowerment strategies that AAA/AAI are promoting through this organisational literature.

Having now established that a programme of intervention by AAA targeted at women's rights and climate change in Melanesia does fall under their organisational goals and mandate, this essay will now discuss again the two case studies of previous programmes with similar objectives: What are the key learnings that can be drawn from them?

Firstly, their emphasis on women is one that is easily transferrable to AAA's Melanesian field programme. Women have long been seen by AAI and, indeed, AAA, as the most efficient and reliable agents of change (ActionAid Australia 2011:4). Although men and women in the two study countries have equal rights under the constitutions and both states are signatory to CEDAW, gender inequality remains a severe impediment to development and one of the most visible violations of human rights. Both PNG and SI are predominantly patriarchal societies in which women continue to face severe inequalities, in all spheres of life: social, cultural, economic and political. For example, PNG has a 2009 Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) of 148, placing it at the lowest level for all Pacific Island Countries, and just above Haiti and Sudan (UNDP 2009:3). The Solomon Islands performed only marginally better, with a GDI rating of 135 out of 182 (Ibid., 4). Factors such as women's excessive domestic workloads, poor nutrition, and lack of access to safe water, poor access to health centers, high number of pregnancies and high rates of family violence undoubtedly contribute to the significant gender disparities between female and male (UNIFEM, 2007).

There is scope for this project to go even further than was attempted by the two case studies, by explicitly targeting women as change agents in all areas of project design and implementation. In a region where female political participation is almost incomparably low, and where 'customary law, largely unwritten, plays a big part in sanctioning harmful practices against women' (UNDAW 2009:2), raising the standing of women in the community through education and capacity-building is paramount.

Secondly, the use of the empowerment framework by each case study has been explored, with an examination of the differences in organisational ideology and how this has affected the implementation of the empowerment approach at the field level. CARE sought in their ALP programme to engage only in civil and/or political matters where these strayed into their paths, placing greater emphasis on their 'core business' of economic and social 'livelihood securities' (CARE 2008:4). Contrastingly, ActionAid Bangladesh, reflecting the overarching principles of AAI's HRBA, placed equal emphasis on challenging the embedded structures through programmes of collective action and solidarity building, alongside more traditional 'service-provision' style activities such as adaptation education.

Considering that these different strategies are indeed reflective of their respective organisational understandings of the HRBA, it is here suggested that AAA should seek to replicate the empowerment approach of AAB rather than CARE. This suggestion is further supported by AAA, in their aim to 'enable poor and excluded people, particularly women, to secure access to, and control over, the decision making processes essential to improving their livelihoods' (ActionAid Australia 2011:3).

For, it is here argued that enabling women to improve their livelihood securities while responding to the increasing threat of climate change in PNG and SI will be unsustainable and ineffective, without simultaneously challenging and overcoming prevailing structural inequities. For example, the lack of political representation of women in these countries presents a clear barrier to women in their attempts to effectively adapt to climate change: As women are more vulnerable to climate disasters due to their unequally constructed roles and responsibilities, an absence of female voices in parliament exacerbates and reinforces this trend. This maintains the political realm in the Pacific described by Sepoe as 'no-woman's land' (1994:252). A severe lack of government representation highlights women's visibly poorer and more economically vulnerable position (Bate & Khan 2010:4). Thus, an 'empowerment' approach must seek to overcome this prevailing institutional discrimination.

Another important element under a HRBA which should be incorporated by AAA into any programme design and implementation in Melanesia is that of rights-holder participation. This involves ensuring that the assessment, analysis, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation are deliberately participatory, and may be viewed as an attempt to move away from top-down, welfare-style development paradigms of the past (Mousseau, 2005).

Vast amounts of money have been directed at Melanesia, and in particular at PNG, by actors such as the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). These have largely focused on economic growth and the transition to a cash-based economy (Mousseau, 2005). An HRBA-informed programmatic intervention in PNG by an organisation such as AAA, presents an opportunity to shift paradigmatic understandings of 'development' and 'progress' towards a closer alignment with Sen's 'capabilities approach,' and away from neoliberal, market-based approaches.

Both CARE and AAB demonstrate clearly the incorporation of a participatory approach, CARE through their 'combination of knowledges,' which explains that local knowledge, scientific knowledge and rights knowledge should be integrated within any community-based adaptation programme to enhance participation and ownership, and AAB through their 'people's research process,' which has taught people how to organise and how to use the knowledge they already have to act collectively on climate change. Both of these strategies provide excellent and replicable examples which should be considered by AAA in incorporating participatory engagement into their programme design.

Lastly, but importantly, AAA's research project should be carefully and explicitly tailored to the context in which the intervention will take place. As we have learned, women in PNG and SI face various challenges which, while they may be similarly experienced by women across the global South, are specific to their local context.

Now that the findings from each of the data collection stages have emerged, if only preliminarily, it is possible to extrapolate from the data the kinds of considerations that must be made in establishing a presence in PNG and SI in the area of women's rights and climate change. Firstly, it was found in both countries that 'women were identified as being most vulnerable to climate change because of their role as primary food producers' (ActionAid Australia 2011:1). However, changes in seasons and weather patterns were identified as having an adverse impact on women's ability to produce sufficient variety and quantity of food for their families.

Additionally, despite women's role in food production being seen as an important determinant of food security, 'men were more likely than women to have a higher level of awareness about climate change. Whilst women in the study communities identified a whole range of issues related to climate change, these were based solely on women's own experiences, rather than on external information' (ActionAid Australia 2011:2). In Derin, PNG, female participants in the focus group discussion stated that men had access to information about climate change but were not sharing the information with the women (ActionAid Australia, 2011).

These findings clearly demonstrate the need for women in PNG and SI to participate more fully in community discussions about climate change, and the need for broader dissemination of information about climate change and adaptation measures. This represents a service gap which could be effectively filled by an INGO such as AAA, either independently or in collaboration with such partner organisations as those that assisted in the data collection processes, the Bismarck-Ramu Group of PNG, and the Solomon Islands Development Trust. While the findings from the data are context-specific and thus invaluable in shaping the specific programmatic strategies of intervention, the broader methodological elements of empowerment, participatory engagement and emphasis on women as highlighted in the two case studies, provide insightful HRBA-informed theoretical grounding and practical guidance.

This essay has sought to analyse how AAA might best establish a presence in the Pacific Island nations of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, in the area of women's rights and climate change. The analysis was informed throughout by the HRBA, a development paradigm and normative philosophy that explains poverty as a direct consequence of the denial or violation of human rights.

The essay also examined the mission and goals of AAI and AAA, as extrapolated through key organisational documents, in order to determine whether such a programme of intervention in the Pacific in the area of women's rights and climate change would fall under the mandate of AAA. It was found that such a programme would indeed fit wholly within the mandate of AAA, and would indeed help facilitate the fulfillment of this mandate. Education and vocational training of women food producers and the fostering of capacity for collective action through programmes of solidarity-building amongst rights-holders were found to be particularly representative of the types of HRBA strategies AAA promote through their organisational literature.

The essay then turned to an analysis of two relevant case studies. Each case study involved practical intervention by an NGO employing the HRBA, in the area of women's rights and climate change. This served to illuminate already-established best practice in intervention strategy. Elements of each programme were considered demonstrative of AAA's HRBA, and it was suggested that an intervention by AAA in Melanesia should incorporate certain methodologies prevalent in the case studies, and even seek to replicate some specific strategies, such as CARE's 'combination of knowledges' and AAB's 'people's research process.' It was also found that for AAA's HRBA-informed activities, in contrast to those of CARE's, equal emphasis should be placed on building capacity in the area of civil and political rights, as should be placed on strengthening economic and social livelihood securities.

The initial research findings to have emerged from the data, as well as broader information on PNG and SI extrapolated from the literature were then considered in light of all the above information on women's rights and climate change intervention under an HRBA. It was found that there does exist both considerable scope and urgent need for such action in the region, and that a programme of intervention incorporating AAA's ideological, axiological and practical methodologies would present women in PNG and SI with new avenues with which to challenge and overcome the barriers they face in their daily lives—within their social, political, cultural, and now too their natural environments.

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