

Chapter one: Introduction

The research problem

Aboriginal poverty represents an issue for Australian democracy and a human rights issue of international significance. Australia is a wealthy country. It has an industrialised economy, an established political democracy, and a relatively small population of 20 million people. It has a targeted welfare system which provides a social safety-net to mitigate poverty, and government commitments to universal school education and a minimum level of health care. Aboriginal Australians are a small minority (at least 2.5%) that numbers about half a million people (ABS 2007: 4). Government reports repeatedly document that Aboriginal Australians do not share in the wealth of the country (SCRGSP 2007; HREOC 2003, 2005; ABS 2007).

Comparisons within Australia indicate that Aboriginal Australians¹ experience relative poverty. Professor Marcia Langton, Foundation Chair of Australian Indigenous Studies, University of Melbourne, cites the 1999 Australian Bureau of Statistics description (Langton 2002: 3):

Indigenous Australians are disadvantaged on a wide range of health and welfare measures throughout the life cycle, according to a comprehensive report released jointly today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Babies born to Indigenous mothers are more likely than other babies to die around the time of birth. Those who survive are more likely than other Australians to live in poor conditions, to be unemployed, to suffer from violence, to be imprisoned, to develop a range of chronic diseases, to be admitted to hospital, and to die at a young age.

More than half of the deaths among Indigenous males in 1995–97 occurred among people who had not yet reached their 50th birthday. Three out of four Indigenous males who died had not yet turned 65. Among Indigenous females, about four in ten deaths occurred before age 50 and two in three before age 65. By contrast, the majority of deaths in Australia (73% of male deaths and 84% of female deaths) occurred in people older than 65 years.

¹ I do not imply that every Aboriginal Australian lives in poverty (see Foley's 2006 discussion of successful Aboriginal entrepreneurs). I make this point because it is important that escaping poverty does not become seen as un-Aboriginal.

Australian policies have failed to impact on the situation. Walter and Saggars (2007: 96) review recent reports and suggest that in relative terms the “poor socioeconomic circumstances of Aboriginal people do not appear to be improving”. This represents an even greater concern because Aboriginal policy has been developed outside government’s own policy standards (HREOC 2007: 1). It has been informed by ideology and quarantined from evidence of both what works and where Aboriginal Australians live (Dodson 2006: 10).

Aboriginal poverty is pervasive throughout Australia. The great majority of Aboriginal Australians (76%) live in urban and regional areas. The remaining quarter (24%) live in remote areas (ABS 2007: 6). Average life expectancies are consistent across Australia (SCRGSP 2007: 3.4), indicating no correlation between life expectancy and where Aboriginal Australians live.

According to Larissa Behrendt, Professor of Law and Indigenous Studies, University of Technology, Sydney, there is a “disproportionate fixation” with Aboriginal Australians who live in remote areas. She suggests it results from mainstream views about who *real* Aboriginal people are, and where *real* Aboriginal people live (Behrendt 2007: 5). Jill Gallagher, chief executive of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, argues it is “romantic and expedient to look to distant desert people for examples of indigenous disadvantage” (2005: 1) while ignoring Aboriginal Australians who live closer to home. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Professor of Indigenous Studies, Queensland University of Technology, explains that this fixation reflects a Western worldview she calls *Whiteness* (2000). *Whiteness* uses polarised thinking to make sense of Aboriginality where traditional means authentic, and contemporary means inauthentic (2000: 76). *Whiteness* also invalidates the identity of Aboriginal Australians in urban and rural Australia:

[This view] depicts Indigenous cultures as frozen in time. [Whereas evidence presents a] picture of Indigenous culture (urban and non urban) as being one of ‘living, breathing, evolving cultures in the here and now’. (HOR 2001: 93)

Atkinson, Taylor and Walter (2008: 2) argue the invisibility of urban and regional Aboriginal poverty “even while [Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians] are residing side by side” is made possible by “socio-economic exclusion and political marginalisation”. They conclude this operates as a *de facto* apartheid (2008: 14).

International comparisons indicate Aboriginal poverty is human rights issue of international significance. Aboriginal life expectancy averages are lower than the life expectancy averages in countries assisted by Australian humanitarian aid programs including India, sub-Saharan Africa, and Cambodia (HREOC 2003). While USA, Canada and New Zealand have improved indigenous average life expectancy, Australia has not (Marmot cited in HREOC 2005: 29). These circumstances combined with ineffective Australian policy responses have been described as genocide (HREOC 2005: 79).

Reflecting on Aboriginal poverty, Marcia Langton (2002: 3) suggests:

We are forced, if concern for one's fellows is held as a mark of humanity, to ask why these conditions persist, and if possible, to identify the ways that would most effectively bring improvements in the living conditions of Australian indigenous people.

This thesis aims to contribute to discussion about these questions.

Beginnings

This thesis was motivated by my own experiences during more than 20 years working in and around Aboriginal development. Aboriginal development is an area which mainstream Australians often see as a lost cause. As a result they often see non-Aboriginal practitioners of Aboriginal development (of which I am one) as just as perplexing as the Aboriginal contexts in which we work. For years I have been seeking a broader framework to understand and apply to Aboriginal development, to legitimise and extend what I have learned on the ground.

I have always found the Aboriginal development literature frustrating. It is rarely holistic. Instead it is compartmentalised into silos; disciplines which closely reflect Western professions (health, law, education, history, etc.).² Equally I found the community development literature unsatisfactory, often presented as a collection

² A search of journal titles beginning with 'Aboriginal' in the University of New England (UNE) Dixon Library catalogue is indicative. It returned twenty-eight entries: sixteen concerned health, four concerned law, three concerned history, two concerned education, and a further three concerned government news, new publications and welfare (search conducted 19 Dec. 2009).

of success stories without an examination of their commonalities.³ Within the Australian community development literature, Aboriginal development is often treated as a cultural concern,⁴ instead of modelling the inclusion advocated by its theory.

In 2000 my work included a short contract with an Australian international development non government organisation (NGO): an aid agency. I worked on planning consultations with two Aboriginal communities in different parts of regional New South Wales (NSW). This put me in *the crossover* of Aboriginal development and international development. I found myself comfortable with colleagues who shared an approach borrowed from international development, yet I struggled with its application in regional NSW. I thought they had it right and they had it wrong at the same time. I began to ask myself:

- What would happen if AusAID (Australian Agency for International Development) had the Aboriginal affairs portfolio? What would they apply from work with developing countries? What would they change? How would that compare with existing Aboriginal policy?

At the same time I questioned:

- Was the *gender strategy* advanced by my colleagues (to get jobs and therefore income to women who will feed the kids) not just another *double shift*? What impact did the First World social safety-net which targeted mothers have? The dependency ratio quantified the many dependent children cared for by far fewer working-aged adults, and the census data indicated a high proportion of sole parent families mostly headed by women. What impact did that have?
- Was constructing a community centre on land controlled by one of three local affiliations actually *building on assets*, or would it undermine pluralism and interdependencies, and thus embed factionalism?
- Could an Aboriginal 'community owned' building company be expected to start up and survive when it had to comply with First World requirements including documentation for government tendering, documentation of strategies to manage occupational health and safety risks, Goods and

³ See for example Boughton (2005: 202), Feffer (2002), and Blaser, Feit & McRae (2004).

⁴ See for example Ife's (2002) Community Development textbook which marginalises Aboriginal development within a section on culture.

Services Tax tracking, online cost recovery procedures for apprenticeship training, and the Building Code of Australia?

I continued to search but found no answers. My enduring interest led me to explore Development Studies through a Masters program within the field of Peace Studies at UNE, Armidale, NSW. I understand that those perplexed by my Aboriginal development work may wonder that it could be explored through Peace Studies. How is it relevant? The disremembered European colonisation of Australia's original inhabitants was described by the anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner in 1968 as *The Great Australian Silence*: a "cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale" (cited in Dillon and Westbury 2007). Peace Studies concerns societies divided by conflict and violence and their transformation to social and economic co-operation and peaceful co-existence. It goes further than considering the inter-community relations of the opposing sides: it also concerns how violence fractures relations within communities (or intra-community relations) and changes their functioning. These inter-community and intra-community analyses have proved valuable in exploring the complexities of Aboriginal poverty.

Research objectives

My main research question is:

Are there lessons from international development for Aboriginal Australian poverty reduction?

More specifically I set out to explore (through the work of aid agencies):⁵

- the application of international development principles, policies and practices for Aboriginal poverty reduction in Australia
- the contextual factors which influence the transferability of these (principles, policies and practices) particularly the First World environment, the Fourth World position of Aboriginal Australians, and Aboriginal diversity.

⁵ The focus of the research is the aid agencies' work, not the work of development practitioners who are Aboriginal within those agencies.

My objectives were to contribute to:

- generating discussion among international development, Aboriginal development and community development practitioners, policy makers and theorists
- holding mainstream thinking about Aboriginal poverty reduction accountable to its own standards (I believe it is an area where unexamined ideology frequently enables suspension of logic)
- informing future Australian policies and practices to reduce Aboriginal poverty.

Definition of concepts

I reserve the term *indigenous* to describe the aboriginal peoples throughout the world, and do not use the term indigenous to describe Aboriginal Australians unless when I am citing another. My experience supports the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC 2003: 2) view that “most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prefer terms that better reflect their cultural identity such as Nyoongar, Koori, Murri, Ngaanyatjarra, Nunga and Palawa”. I have generally settled on the term *Aboriginal⁶ Australians* in preference to *Aboriginal communities* because the term communities is often misused and misunderstood in mainstream Australia (Foley 2006: 3). The term *Aboriginal Australians* holds the same implication of diversity as the term *non-Aboriginal Australians*, and implies the shared location and citizenship with non-Aboriginal Australians. I use the term mainstream Australians to describe those non-Aboriginal Australians who share Western worldviews. I recognise that not every non-Aboriginal Australian is a mainstream Australian.

I use the term *worldviews* in preference to *culture*. My perception is that culture in multi-cultural Australia is reserved for *others* while Western culture is not seen as culture at all, but as universal, normal, even *right*. Aboriginal worldviews, philosophies, or ways of knowing, being and doing are common to Aboriginal Australians.⁷ I use the plural of worldview because it provides for diversity among

⁶ Torres Strait Islanders are a distinct group with a distinct culture, history and political situation.

⁷ Simple examples are found in the *Australian Reconciliation Barometer* (Auspoll 2009: 25). These suggest some specific Aboriginal worldviews, *and* a lack of mainstream awareness of them:

Aboriginal Australians. Just as there is no single Western worldview, there is no single Aboriginal worldview. The term ‘culture’ with its multi-cultural connotations of costumes and cuisine does not set the stage for the tensions which exist between Western and Aboriginal worldviews which are explored throughout this thesis.

I adopted the term *Fourth World* when I worked in Redfern in the 1990s. Redfern is an inner Sydney suburb and home to an Aboriginal community drawn from across NSW and further. Officially it had a small resident population centred around The Block of housing owned by the Aboriginal Housing Company. Symbolically, it was much more. The Block had become an Aboriginal space, a no-go zone for those without business there. It was the birth place of much political activism and of hope, but it was also gripped by social breakdown. The NSW Police Tactical Response Group had raided houses on The Block a year before I started work there. In January 1995, we kept our doors open on The Block through ‘riots’ which became national headline news. The resulting media attention put an abrupt end to the retail trade which had been booming on Redfern’s main street. A few years earlier designer clothes factory outlets attracted by the only cheap rents left in Sydney’s inner city had been moving into Redfern Street. It had become a magnet for bargain shoppers. At its height Janette Howard, the then Prime Minister’s wife, was spotted there with her shopping bags. She shared the footpath with teenage Aboriginal mothers pushing toddlers in strollers on their way to Centrelink, the courthouse or the bank. For me the bargain shopping boom was both personally convenient and politically confronting. The most and least privileged of Australian society shared the same physical space on the main street. ‘Fourth World’ was the only term I found to describe simultaneously being in a First World country and experiencing Third World conditions – as though two parallel universes had collided.

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- 96% of Aboriginal respondents (but only 68% of the national sample) agreed that “connection to their traditional lands is an important part of an indigenous person’s identity”.
 - 97% of Aboriginal respondents (but only 67% of the national sample) agreed that “indigenous people tend to have closer family relationships and feel responsibility for members of their extended family”.
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Professor Lowitja O'Donoghue, in the 'Make *Indigenous* Poverty History' campaign, also uses the term Fourth World (cited in NATSIEC n.d.: 8):

A definition of Fourth World communities which I read recently describes Indigenous Australia very well. I quote:

Fourth World communities are characterised by their experience of being colonised or of being a minority in relation to the dominant encompassing state. Many have been forced to assimilate, losing most of their land and their economic base, and therefore their autonomy.

The notion of a Fourth World relies on the terms First, Second and Third Worlds. These terms originated at the beginning of the cold war to characterise the political and economic positions of nation states. First World means industrialised capitalist countries (mainly in Western Europe and including USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). Second World refers to industrialised or industrialising mainly socialist countries (particularly Eastern Europe and its ideological allies). Third World includes underdeveloped or developing countries (mainly in Africa, Asia and Latin America). Fourth World describes people living in Third World conditions within First World countries.

The terms went out of use when the cold war ended. First World and Third World were replaced by the terms industrialised and developing countries or global north and global south. At the risk of sounding dated I have revived the terms First World, Third World and Fourth World and use them throughout this thesis because they show the spatial dimension (the parallel universes) of Aboriginal poverty.⁸

I use the term *aid agency* to describe international development NGOs. The term aid agency appears in marketing for Australian international development NGOs, and allows me to use fewer words and avoid an acronym. Aid agencies use the term *activities* to collectively describe their programs, projects, advocacy etc. I have used the term *Aboriginal community-controlled organisations* rather than Aboriginal NGOs because this reflects the way the organisations describe themselves.

⁸ I acknowledge that the Third World is not one place, and certainly not a homogenous conglomerate of non-Western *others*.

Legacy of colonisation

As noted earlier, Australia has not come to terms with the European colonisation of Aboriginal Australians, nor the fact that the violence of colonisation has had inter-generational impacts. Because of the comparative nature of this research, it is useful to locate Australian history in an international context. In the history of European empires Australia was a colony of replacement (Makuwira 2007: 132) or a colony of settlement (Rowley 1972: 4) similar to Canada and New Zealand, as opposed to a colony of exploitation. Australia had a small indigenous population, and climate and geography suited to European agricultural and health technologies (Rowley 1972: 4). The population of European colonisers increased. Aboriginal Australians became “a small racial and cultural minority, trapped, as it were, within a European state” and maintained by social exclusion (Rowley 1972: 5). In democracies minorities do not achieve effective political representation through the ballot box.

Colonies of exploitation, for example in Asia and PNG, shared a different history. They had dense populations which provided labour for colonial economies, or tropical climates not suited to European agricultural or health technologies. The population of European colonisers did not increase. Indigenous populations achieved independence because colonisers were forced to negotiate under threat of indigenous rebellion.

Havemann (1999: 22–62) identifies common eras in the histories of indigenous policy in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, although he acknowledges that these were not always chronological. In Australia (until the late 1990s when Havemann was writing) these are broadly represented in the following eras:

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|-------------|--|
| Pre 1860: | Coercion, genocide, and dispossession era |
| 1860–1920: | Paternalism and coercion, segregation and protection era |
| 1920–1960: | Paternalism and assimilation era |
| 1960–1970: | Integration and segregation era |
| 1970–1990s: | Aboriginal rights talk and confrontation era. |

Havemann's *Aboriginal rights talk and confrontation era* in Australia witnessed Aboriginal civil and land rights movements which successfully forced policies of assimilation and mis-named protection to give way to Aboriginal inclusion under Commonwealth jurisdiction and in the population census (1967), equal wages (in the cattle industry in 1968), land rights legislation (1970s), the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991), self-determination in the form of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) (1990–2005) and native title legislation (1993). The same era saw the emergence of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations operating in health, law, housing, early childhood education, adult education, governance, employment and community development. It is outside the scope of this research to detail this history here; however, an account can be found in Attwood (2003). These achievements unfortunately have not ended Aboriginal poverty.

The legacy of Australian colonial history is reflected in attitudes today. According to the *Australian Reconciliation Barometer* (Auspoll 2009):

- there are low levels of trust between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians
- most Aboriginal Australians see themselves as marginalised or on the edge of mainstream society
- most non-Aboriginal Australians do not know what they can do to end Aboriginal disadvantage.

This research, in different ways, speaks to each of these attitudes.

Limitations of the research

The research explores the lessons from international development for Aboriginal poverty reduction in Australia. I do this by considering the Aboriginal development work of Australian aid agencies. I do not evaluate the effectiveness of the aid agencies' work. The exploration presents contradictions and tensions in that work, however I do not attempt to resolve these, nor explore how these challenges are managed within the agencies. I do not consider the various roles of Aboriginal Australians within the agencies, nor the perspectives of the Aboriginal beneficiaries of aid agency work. I include the work of Christian aid agencies, but do no more than indicate the complexity of the past and present relationship between Aboriginal Australians and Christianity. I do not explore those relationships.

I do not explore the lessons from the practice of Aboriginal development outside the aid agencies. Although I believe this would be valuable, it is outside the scope of this research. I do not explore the history of the Aboriginal rights movement, nor the history of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations which arose from it.

I do not explore contemporary government policy attempts to reduce Aboriginal poverty, nor previous policies which institutionalised colonial domination. Although I aim to contribute to informing future Australian policies and practices to reduce Aboriginal poverty, I have confined discussion of policy to that which directly relates to the convergence of international and Aboriginal development. A review of the highly contested, and as note earlier, ideologically informed (Dodson 2006: 10) area of Aboriginal policy is outside the scope of this research. Where I do refer to policy it is Australian Government policy, and I do not consider the various policies of each state and territory.

I recognise that the term *poverty* is not commonly used by Aboriginal Australians to describe their circumstances (Eversole, Ridgeway and Mercer 2005: 264; Lahn 2008). It is outside the scope of this research to investigate the reasons and significance of this.

Structure of the thesis

The remainder of this thesis is structured from the general to the specific. I begin with international perspectives, and progressively narrow the focus to Aboriginal poverty reduction – first in theory, then in practice.

In chapters two and three I review the literature, or what we already know. In chapter two I explore poverty reduction in the field of international development. This establishes the terrain which converges with Aboriginal development literature which I will review in chapter three. It also provides the theoretical foundations for discussion about the Aboriginal development work of Australian aid agencies in later chapters.

Chapter three concerns the discussion of contemporary Aboriginal poverty. First I review the *insider* perspective of Aboriginal writers, and then how diverse Australian perspectives converge with international perspectives. This thesis adds to that literature.

In chapter four I set out how I went about the research and why I chose that approach. I explain the complexities of working as an *outsider* in Aboriginal research, and how my planned research design translated into the real world.

In chapter five I explore the background to the Aboriginal development work of Australian aid agencies as an industry. I use documents to locate the work in a historical, social, political, economic and religious context. I then consider how three agencies, World Vision Australia, Oxfam Australia⁹ and the Fred Hollows Foundation, use international development approaches in their international and Aboriginal activities.

In chapters six and seven I set out the research findings from the analysis of interviews with non-Aboriginal development practitioners and agency documents. In chapter six I analyse the differences between Aboriginal development and international development work, and differences working in diverse contexts within Australia. In chapter seven I explore the principles, policies and practices which transfer to Aboriginal development work.

I conclude in chapter eight by drawing the main findings of the research together in a critical analysis, considering their implications, and providing suggestions for future research.

⁹ In this thesis World Vision Australia and Oxfam Australia are referred to as World Vision and Oxfam. World Vision International and Oxfam International are referred to in full.

Chapter two: Poverty reduction: International perspectives

*“Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural.
It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated
by the actions of human beings”*

Nelson Mandela

Introduction

In chapter one I described Aboriginal poverty in terms of comparisons within Australia and with Third World countries. In this chapter I examine how different definitions help us understand poverty. I then review theories and approaches from international development about how to reduce poverty, mindful of two questions:

- How relevant are international development theories and approaches to Aboriginal poverty?
- Has international development been successful in reducing poverty?

The chapter has two purposes. First, it establishes the terrain which converges with Aboriginal development literature which I will review in chapter three. Second, it provides the theoretical foundation for the Aboriginal development work of Australian aid agencies which I will discuss in later chapters. It also introduces terms and concepts which are discussed in those chapters.

What is poverty?

Poverty is usually seen as an economic problem, meaning a problem about the allocation of scarce resources. Australian understandings often relate to what people do not have, in other words what they *lack*. The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) provides a typical list: “work and income, education, housing, health and services” (ACOSS 2005). What people in Third World countries lack is usually described in terms of income. The United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) use the income level of *less than one dollar a day* to define poverty. Here we have a paradox. Aboriginal Australians live on far more than a dollar a day, yet, as noted in chapter one, have average life expectancies similar to Third World countries. What other ways are there to understand poverty that may help us make sense of this?

Most of the literature on poverty concerns either First World countries or Third World countries. Spicker (1999) offers definitions of poverty which include both. He identifies eleven 'clusters of meaning' which are distinct but overlapping:

Need:	is lack of material goods or services, such as food, clothes and shelter.
Standard of living:	is position, usually an income level, below a minimum standard.
Limited resources:	is lack of access to resources although basic needs may be met, for example, prisoners and women without power to make decisions.
Lack of basic security:	is vulnerability to risk in meeting needs, for example, ongoing struggle, or ongoing threats to meeting needs.
Lack of entitlement:	is that which prevents people from accessing what they need.
Multiple deprivation:	is a situation of deprivation in many areas, and which is ongoing.
Exclusion:	is a set of social relationships from which people are excluded.
Inequality:	is 'economic distance' between the richest and the poorest people within the same country.
Class:	is a consequence of social structure.
Dependency:	is a position of dependency on the state for income.
Unacceptable hardship:	is material deprivation which is morally unacceptable.

Need or a lack of material goods or services best matches the ACOSS understanding of Australian poverty. However in the context of Aboriginal poverty *exclusion* and *lack of entitlement* are also particularly relevant.

Spicker (2007) describes *exclusion* as people so marginalised from society that they live apart, in a 'Fourth World'. People can be excluded because they are left out (e.g. people with disabilities), shut out (e.g. people living with AIDS), or because they do not sign up to mainstream values (e.g. Romani people also known as Gypsies) (Spicker 2007: 67). Spicker's Fourth World of excluded people includes, but is broader than, the Fourth World of indigenous peoples discussed in chapter one.

Aboriginal Australians can be seen as those who do not sign up to mainstream Australian values. In chapter one I noted the tension between Aboriginal worldviews and Western worldviews. Spicker (2007: 66) notes: "People who were not part of society ... *are not forgiven for their refusal to share in the 'values of the system'*" (emphasis added). Exclusion in these circumstances is an active process – at best coercive, and, at worst, punitive.

Bryant and Kappaz (2005) show how exclusion works. Exclusion can be from the economy (the labour market, land and credit), from public services (health and education), and from civil and political rights. Exclusionary practices can be formally embedded in laws and institutions, or informally embedded in cultural attitudes and behaviour. The interplay between the formal and informal, between state and social practices is important. "State efforts to end legalized exclusion may be ineffective if attitudes and behaviours do not also change" (Bryant and Kappaz 2005: 42). This interplay is illustrated in Figure 2.1 where Bryant and Kappaz identify the roles of state sanction and state acquiescence in social exclusion.

This interplay between state and social practices helps us understand the legacy of colonisation in Australia. For example Aboriginal exclusion from Commonwealth laws and the population census was state sanctioned by the Constitution until the 1967 referendum (Attwood 2003: 62). Yet the referendum did not end social exclusion because attitudes and behaviour did not change. The state role changed from sanctioning to acquiescence.

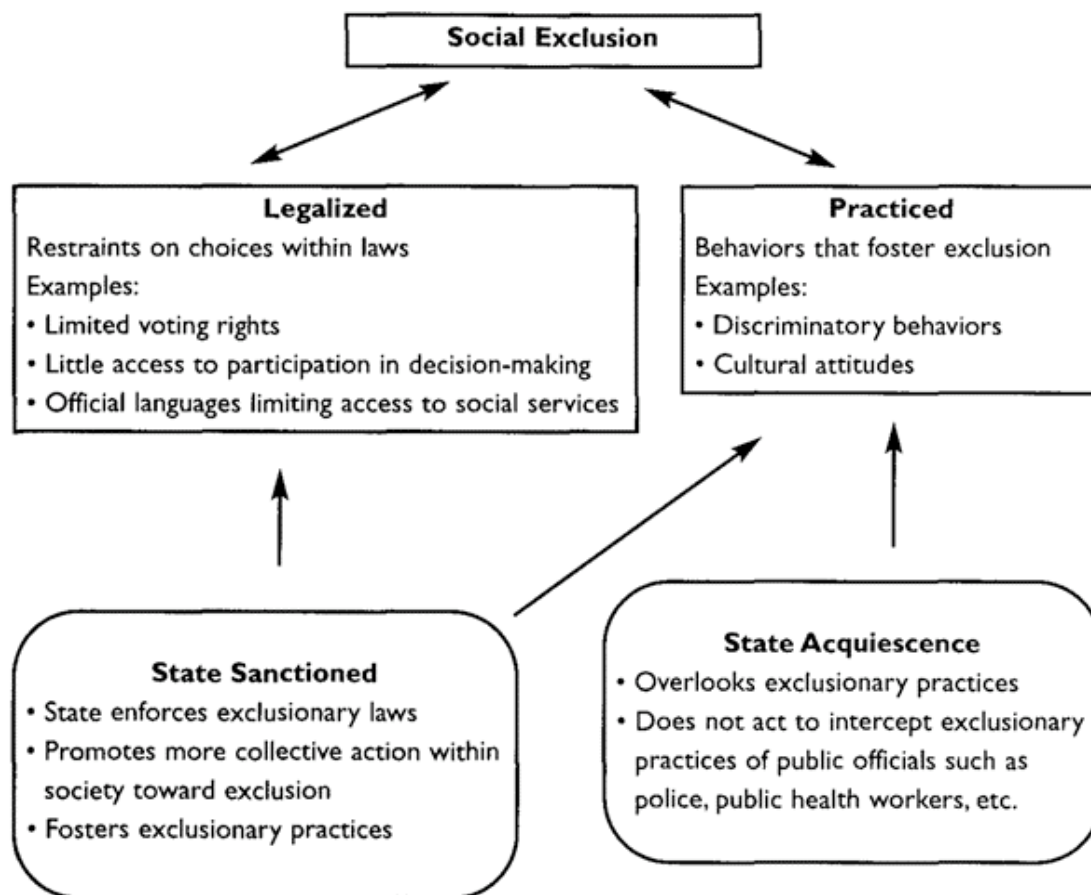


Figure 2.1: Continuum of social exclusion

Source: Bryant and Kappaz 2005: 43

The meaning of poverty as *exclusion* overlaps with the meaning as *lack of entitlement*. Spicker (1999) cites Dreze and Sen's (1989) work on famine where they argue that famine is not the result of lack of food; it is the result of people's lack of entitlement to negotiate for what food exists. People who have the necessary entitlements, or capability to negotiate to meet their needs do not experience poverty (Spicker 1999: 153). Sen (1999) later calls this the *capability approach*. He argues that poverty "must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely lowness of incomes" (1999: 87). Poverty is unfreedom, caused by the deprivation of basic capabilities which would allow people the freedom to negotiate to meet their needs – needs determined by their worldview, not someone else's.

Sen uses life expectancy as a significant indicator of poverty. A life cut short is the ultimate unfreedom (Sen 1999). This makes the comparison of life expectancy

averages between Aboriginal Australians and Third World countries in chapter one a meaningful indicator of poverty.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), spiritual and political leader of the Indian independence movement, is attributed with saying “poverty is the worst form of violence”. Yet none of Spicker’s definitions capture the relationship between poverty and violence. Galtung (1990) identifies three types of violence: direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Direct violence is physical harm including death. Structural violence is perpetrated by systems rather than individuals. Cultural violence makes structural and direct violence appear deserved or ‘in their own best interest’. Australia provides examples of all three types of violence:

Direct violence: has been an ongoing process of Australian colonisation. The last recorded massacre of Aboriginal people was at Coniston, NT in 1928 (Elder 2003: 201).

Structural violence: is evident in government policies to withhold wages from Aboriginal people as recently as the 1980s. Wages were held in trust for the ‘protection’ of Aboriginal people. They have not been returned (Kidd 2006).

Cultural violence: is evident in the official response to the 1928 Coniston massacre. Police perpetrators were legally judged to be acting in self-defence (Elder 2003: 214). Cultural violence is also evident more recently (until 2007) in the refusal of the former Howard government to apologise to the Stolen Generation of Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families. The grounds for refusal were that current generations are not responsible for the wrongs of the past, although the Prime Minister himself was in Parliament at the time when forcible removal was government policy until 1969. The traumatic impacts of the policy and the continuing impact on future

generations were vividly described by Stolen Generation members in evidence to the national inquiry which produced the *Bringing Them Home Report* (HREOC 1997).

Poverty can therefore be seen as a form of ongoing violence against Aboriginal Australians. This is not to say that structural and cultural violence perpetrated by Australian institutions are the only forms of violence experienced by Aboriginal Australians. As I will discuss in chapter three, intra-community violence, or lateral violence, is increasing.

This review of meanings of poverty locates Aboriginal poverty in a political and social, as well as economic, context. Aboriginal poverty can be seen as *needs*, that is, a lack of material goods or services, however, it is more complex. The Fourth World position of Aboriginal Australians makes it important to consider poverty in terms of both *exclusion* and the *lack of entitlement* or *capability*. It is also useful to understand Aboriginal poverty as a form of ongoing violence, both structural and cultural, in the context of Australian colonisation.

What is poverty reduction?

In the early 1990s I wondered what international development could offer Aboriginal development and dismissed it. International development was dominated by talk of *Structural Adjustment*¹⁰ for macro-economic reform such as floating the currency. These policies seemed to have returned questionable results in Third World countries,¹¹ and similar policies in Australia had accompanied less opportunities for unskilled work which had previously been taken up by Aboriginal Australians.

When the international development discussion later turned to *poverty reduction*, my interest returned. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers became a condition of World Bank financial assistance in 1999 (Gould 2005); the MDGs aimed to halve

¹⁰ Structural Adjustment was a condition of World Bank and International Monetary Fund financial assistance based on a set of neo-liberal economic policies known as the Washington Consensus described by Rodrik (2004).

¹¹ In many countries the pursuit of economic growth through neo-liberal economic policies had resulted in shrinking GDP and debt crises (Rodrik 2004).

world poverty by 2015 (NATSIEC n.d.); the ‘Make Poverty History’ Campaign called for trade justice, the end to the debt crisis, and more aid (Mandela 2005: 1); and book titles promised *The end of poverty: economic possibilities of our time* (Sachs 2005). The rhetoric of *poverty reduction* rather than economic development (equated with growth in GDP) acknowledged that economic growth did not automatically reduce poverty.

The MDGs are eight goals developed by the United Nations (UN) which set measurable targets and indicators to be achieved by 2015 (in Sachs 2005: 211–213):

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|---------|---|
| Goal 1: | Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger |
| Goal 2: | Achieve universal primary education |
| Goal 3: | Promote gender equality and empower women |
| Goal 4: | Reduce child mortality |
| Goal 5: | Improve maternal health |
| Goal 6: | Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases |
| Goal 7: | Ensure environmental sustainability |
| Goal 8: | Develop a global partnership for development. |

In *The End of Poverty: economic possibilities of our time* (2005) Jeffrey Sachs, a US based economist, sets out a blueprint to achieve the MDGs, end world poverty once and for all, and finally put poor countries on the road to wealth. His ‘on the ground solutions’ are village by village, slum by slum (2005: 242), with the participation of the poor themselves, and enabled by modest aid. The solutions involve five interventions (the Big Five): the industrialisation of the economy; investing in health; investing in education; power, transport and communication; and safe drinking water and sanitation (Sachs 2005: 233–234).

Despite the contested impact of Jeffrey Sachs’ economic advice¹², his ‘on the ground solutions’ are of interest because they synthesise many of the major approaches to poverty reduction since the 1960s: modernisation, basic needs and

¹² Klein (2007: 142–154) argues that impacts in Bolivia increased the poverty of the masses and wealth of elites, and required political repression to do so.

human rights (including gender), participation, and an emphasis on locality. I will discuss these and other approaches later in this chapter. However they are also of interest because Sachs' solutions illustrate how the rhetoric of approaches largely conceived as critical alternatives to the dominant modernisation paradigm (discussed below), have been successfully co-opted into it.

Jeffery Sachs does not address Fourth World poverty. He believes geography is a determinant of poverty (Sachs 2005: 58). North Americans are reminded of the role of geography in their wealth:

Americans, for example, ... forget that they *inherited* a vast continent rich in natural resources, with great soils and ample rainfall, immense navigable rivers, and ... natural ports. [emphasis added] (Sachs 2005: 57)

Such a rewriting of history provides an example of Galtung's (1990) cultural violence: indigenous Americans left their country for the colonialist to *inherit*.

When Jeffery Sachs' idea that geography is a determinant of poverty is combined with an Australian 'disproportionate fixation' with Aboriginal people in remote areas (Behrendt 2007: 5), it is easy to conclude that Aboriginal poverty is caused by remoteness. This is dangerous when, as discussed in chapter one, the great majority (76%) of Aboriginal Australians do not live in remote areas (ABS 2007).

Modernisation, dependency theory and post-development

Modernisation theory

The early years of international development theory ran parallel to the independence of former European colonies following the Second World War. Poverty was seen as a problem of 'traditional' societies. Modernisation was seen as the universal solution. Modernisation focused on domestic factors. Politically, it required the formation of nation states. Economically, it required industrialisation (with associated social/cultural changes) and international trade. This would allow economic *take-off* into self-sustaining growth. The benefits of this growth would *trickle down* and eventually benefit all citizens, lifting the masses out of poverty in an assumed replication of the experience of Western industrialised countries (Pye 1966; Rostow 1971). Modernisation was not seen as Westernisation, but as a path which all societies would inevitably travel. It was seen as *progress*; a natural

evolution; a transition from a primitive to a modern way of intellectual (rational), economic (capitalist) and political (democratic) organisation.

In practice the take-off into self-sustaining economic growth in Third World countries has been an exception rather than the rule, and the benefits of growth have not trickled down. Instead inequality inside Third World countries has increased. New local elites have become wealthy while poverty has increased. Despite its failure to deliver over the last fifty years, modernisation theory has been resilient. Jeffery Sachs (2005) provides a contemporary version:

[If] economic development is a ladder with the higher rungs representing steps up the path to economic well-being, there are roughly one billion people around the world ... too ill, hungry or destitute to even get a foot on the first rung of the development ladder. (p. 18)

[Rich countries] need to invest enough so that these [poorest] countries can get their foot on the ladder. After that the tremendous dynamism of self-sustaining economic growth can take hold. (p. 73)

When Australia, a First World country, experienced an economic *take-off* in agriculture from the 1970s (with more capital intensive and less labour intensive production), Aboriginal participation in the rural market economy decreased (Castle 1987). This pattern was replicated in the 1990s in the urban market economy. The organisation I worked for in Redfern in the 1990s provided employment services to a growing number of unemployed people (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) as a result.

Despite the evidence that economic modernisation has on the whole marginalised, rather than benefited, Aboriginal Australians, policies of assimilation (more recently articulated as mainstreaming) are based on an assumption that Aboriginal Australians need to *progress* to the modern (read Western) worldview, in order to escape poverty.

Dependency theory

Modernisation's failings were explained by dependency theorists such as Frank (1972) and Galeano (1973). As early as the 1960s dependency theorists argued that industrialisation and engagement in international markets were not a path to prosperity. Instead they create a state of dependence or underdevelopment actively maintained by international financial institutions (International Monetary

Fund, World Bank and international trade agreements) in the interests of the First World countries which control those institutions. Dependency theorists saw modernisation as a new colonialism, replacing overt, imperial economic exploitation with covert, First World economic exploitation. They proposed alternatives of self-sufficiency, disengagement with international institutions controlled by the First World, and international alliances with socialist countries or the Second World.

Marcia Langton (2002) proposes a version of dependency theory specifically applied to the situation of Aboriginal Australians. She argues that the administration of Aboriginal welfare, including Stolen Wages referred to earlier in this chapter, has caused and maintains Aboriginal underdevelopment.

Both modernisation theory and dependency theory focus on the role of the state in directing the domestic economy and international economic participation. In this way they are *top-down* approaches.

Post-development

Post-development theorists, such as Escobar (1992, 1995), Esteva (1991, 1992) and Wolfgang Sachs (1992), see 'development' as an invention of outsiders who, through Western eyes, identify and describe the 'problems' of 'others' then impose solutions. They argue that development has impoverished the lives of those it claims to benefit and should be abandoned. The alternative, they suggest, is a political practice which is grassroots based and pluralistic, and in which local culture and local knowledge are central.

Critics argue post-development portrays culture as static, and the recipients of development as lacking agency or adaptability (Kiely 1999). According to Nustad (2001) post-development explains the failure of universal top-down approaches to reduce poverty. Instead of abandoning development, he argues that greater attention to the local context is needed.

The influence of post-development thought in Aboriginal development will be reflected in later chapters in debates about the role of non-Aboriginal people and aid agencies as non-Aboriginal organisations.

Approaches: Human rights, basic needs and capability

Human rights approach

Human rights are rights which are seen as universal (belonging to all people) and individual (inherent to the person) (UNDP 2003: iv). They include civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognises that indigenous peoples have additional rights including the right to self-determination, a distinct identity, and to be free from genocide (UN 2007). The universality of human rights has been challenged as culturally specific to Western worldviews because it emphasises individual rather than collective rights.

The human rights approach to development sees the denial of human rights as a cause of poverty. It is therefore concerned with constraints on power relations, rather than material conditions (Marks 2003: 2). A human rights framework considers that states are *duty-bearers* and citizens are *claim-holders* (UNDP 2003: iv). It focuses attention on the citizens articulating their claims, and states meeting their duty.

In Australia the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) role includes overseeing the Australian government's commitments to human rights. Noel Pearson's *Our Right to take Responsibility* (2000) and *On the Human Right to Misery, Mass Incarceration and Early Death* (2001a), which I will discuss later in this chapter, challenge how the human rights agenda has been implemented in relation to Aboriginal Australians.

Basic needs approach

The basic needs approach argues that certain basic needs are fundamental pre-conditions to economic development:

- minimum material needs (food, clothes and shelter)
- access to essential services (water and sanitation, health care, education and transport)
- non-material needs such as human rights and freedoms, for example, the right to participation (Ghai 1977).

The basic needs approach advances both a human rights agenda and a development agenda at the same time. By dealing with deprivation, for example, housing, it satisfies human rights, and by developing human resources, for example, education, it enables economic growth (Streeten 1979).

A basic needs approach to Aboriginal poverty can easily be managed by government departments which compartmentalise education, health and housing, for example. However this directs attention away from the holistic nature of the lived experience of poverty. The interconnections between, for example, health and other basic needs are clearly set out in the *Social Determinants of Health* (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003) which I will discuss in chapter three. Responding to poverty in terms of compartments, rather than interconnecting systems, is identified as problematic in the Dillon Report (2000) which I will also discuss in chapter three.

Capability approach

The capability approach developed by Sen (1999) was mentioned earlier in this chapter in relation to meanings of poverty. The capability approach provides a holistic perspective missing in the basic needs approach. Sen (1999) views poverty reduction as a political process, not an economic one. He argues that development “requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as *intolerance* or overactivity of repressive states” (emphasis added) (Sen 1999: 3). Australian intolerance of Aboriginal worldviews was discussed earlier as contributing to the exclusion or Fourth World position of Aboriginal people.

The capability approach is a fundamental shift in the way of looking at development:

What the capability perspective does in poverty analysis is to enhance understanding of the nature and causes of poverty by shifting attention from the means (income) to the ends (or freedom to pursue). (Sen 1999: 90)

Sen (1999: 110) argues that the process of prioritising capabilities requires that value judgements are made explicit, “in a field where value judgements cannot and

should not be avoided”. As noted earlier, this provides the opportunity for non-Western worldviews to shape development.

Sen’s capability approach can be seen in Rowse’s (2002) *Indigenous Futures: choice and development for Aboriginal and Islander Australia*. Rowse (2002: 5–13) argues that Aboriginal development can be assessed on one criterion: whether it increases the capacity of Aboriginal Australians to make choices. Rowse (2002) values choice because it provides different communities, families and individuals the right to pursue lifestyles in line with their differing resources, cultural expressions and aspirations. These choices would reflect Aboriginal worldviews.

Participatory development

Participatory development challenges the assumption that modernisation is a universal solution to be applied everywhere. It recognises that each local community experiences unique circumstances (local context) and holds its own worldviews. While post-development finds the *development relationship* (between an outsider and insider) problematic, participatory development, largely pioneered by NGOs, attempts to recognise the problems inherent in the relationships, and to specifically address them. Participatory development encompasses a range of approaches and tools: *endogenous development*, *participatory rural appraisal*, *sustainable livelihoods approach* and *animation* are discussed below.

Endogenous development

I have noted earlier that modernisation theory and dependency theory are both fundamentally top-down approaches to development. They can be seen as exogenous, meaning development from without. Endogenous development, or development from within, is more aligned to post-development theory.

Endogenous development is “defined by the choices and opportunities of the local people, [and] implies a process of getting access to, and making good use of these resources”, complimented by external knowledge and resources (Haverkort, van ’t Hooft and Hiemstra 2003: 31). Endogenous development assumes that modern worldviews are specific to Western cultures, and that indigenous worldviews commonly include intersecting social, spiritual and material dimensions.

Participatory rural appraisal

Participatory rural appraisal (Chambers 1994, 1997) emerged as a tool for information gathering in project appraisal in rural environments. It spread to non-rural areas and beyond the appraisal stage. It seeks to transform relationships through two-way learning and to challenge the developer's 'expert' status. It values local knowledge, and the analytical and creative problem-solving abilities of the poor (Chambers 1994). As I will discuss in chapter seven, participatory rural appraisal has been used by Australian aid agencies in Aboriginal development activities.

Sustainable livelihoods approach

The sustainable livelihoods approach or framework is an analytical tool to understand rural livelihoods (rather than jobs), usually for households or villages (rather than individuals). It is participatory, people-centred, holistic, dynamic (taking into account changes with time), and asset-based (rather than needs-based). A livelihood is made up of human, natural, financial, social and physical capital. These interact with each other and with policies and institutions in the broader environment (Chambers 1995; DFID 1999). The sustainable livelihoods approach provides a way to map interconnections which can be used to identify strategies to reduce poverty. The sustainable livelihoods approach, adapted to Aboriginal contexts, has been documented by the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC 2009).

Animation

Animation, described by Rahman (1993), emerged in the 1980s as a process of community development. An externally trained animator or 'middle class activist' (an outsider) (Rahman 1993: 159) acts as a catalyst for people to begin to reflect on and take collective action to improve their situation; to *self-develop* at a local level. Typically animation results in people forming grassroots organisations. If these multiply and become allied, they begin to take pressure group action beyond the local level for system change.

Animation has built-in safeguards to ensure *self-development* does not become diverted by external influences. First, external animators have a time limited role.

This is because the animator is not structurally accountable to the grassroots and can inhibit local creativity in the long term. Second, direct funding is not provided.

The 'ideology' in animation work is that solidarity among the poor, and their reflecting and working together to solve common problems, are desirable for their own sake, whether or not material help from outside is available. (Rahman 1993: 158)

Animation does not provide direct funds because this distorts motivation for people's participation and creates dependence. It limits grassroots control and it limits sustainability when funding ceases. Animation does not exclude, but rather facilitates, the "progressive involvement of the public resource system to provide them with *supplementary resources*" (emphasis added) (Rahman 1993: 159). This is contrasted with *dependence on external finance*.

My perspective is that within Aboriginal development circles the idea that external finance could be rejected is either contentious or simply outside the paradigm. Australia is a wealthy country with relatively few Aboriginal Australians, not a poor country with mass poverty.¹³ The suggestion that Aboriginal Australians fund their own development (e.g. by pooling savings in a mutual benefit fund) is seen as being asked to pay twice: once through dispossession of colonisation, and again to resolve the poverty this created. The distinction between organisations which are otherwise self-sustaining (and supplemented by external resources), and organisations which are dependent on external resources, is rarely made. The irony is that almost all Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are dependent on, rather than supplemented by, government funding. Their ongoing existence is therefore controlled by government.¹⁴ Self-sustaining Aboriginal sporting groups, church groups and family businesses are among the few exceptions.

¹³ In chapter one I indicated that Aboriginal Australians are at least 2.5% of the Australian population (ABS 2007).

¹⁴ In Armidale, NSW during the course of this research one Aboriginal community-controlled organisation wound-up after the government withdrew Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) funds. Another Aboriginal community-controlled organisation's government funds were transferred to mainstream health organisations. The Aboriginal community controlled organisation now faces an uncertain future.

Women, gender and development

The impact of development on women and the impact of women on development has been the subject of ongoing discussion since the 1970s. Momsen (2004: 12–16) has identified three themes in that discussion:

- that economic development impacts on men and women differently, and the impact on women has generally been more negative
- that gender roles in the public sphere (production) and private sphere (household) cannot be understood in isolation from one another
- that division of labour by sex occurs in all cultures, and that it is different in different contexts.

Early approaches (called Women In Development or WID) sought to integrate women into existing development processes. Later approaches viewed women as a separate group, with specific needs addressed by specific programs which excluded men (Women And Development or WAD). More recent approaches (Gender And Development or GAD) view development as having uneven impacts on women and men, and on their relations with each other (Momsen 2004: 12–16).

Like the basic needs approach, women's rights advances human rights and development effectiveness at the same time. Kofi Annan, then United Nations Secretary-General, has observed:

Study after study has shown that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity or to reduce infant and maternal mortality ... improve nutrition and promote health ... as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation. (cited in AusAID 2007: 4)

Mainstreaming gender (Gender Mainstreaming) makes gender a central, not a marginal, concern in development activities by ensuring "that women's as well as men's concerns and experiences are integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all projects ..." (Momsen 2004: 15). Mainstreaming gender requires that context or situation analysis includes gender analysis of the roles, needs and participation of women and men.

In chapter three I will consider the application of gender analyses to Aboriginal contexts and discuss gender in aid agencies' Aboriginal development work.

Approaches to indigenous poverty

Almost all indigenous peoples are stateless. Through colonisation they have become part of a nation state in which they are generally not a majority¹⁵ and which does not share their worldviews. I describe this as a Fourth World in chapter one. A tent embassy established on the lawns outside Parliament House, Canberra, in 1972 is a symbol of the position of Aboriginal Australians in relation to the state in Australia: less recognised than foreign states with embassies which facilitate diplomatic relations.

Nietschmann reported in 1987 that of “the 120 wars in the world today, 98 per cent are in the Third World and the majority, 72 per cent, are between states and Fourth World nations” (cited in Hyndman 1991). The relationships between states and the Fourth World is clearly a source of conflict.

Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, an indigenous leader from the Philippines and chairperson of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, argues that indigenous poverty is caused by past and continuing colonisation, in other words by:

the destruction of indigenous economic and socio-political systems, continuing systemic racism and discrimination, social exclusion, and the non-recognition of indigenous peoples’ individual and collective rights. (Tauli-Corpuz 2005: 12)

She uses the term *development aggression* to describe projects imposed on indigenous people in the name of modernising or nation building. She cautions that pursuing the MDGs has the potential to increase indigenous poverty which will be invisible if the goals are measured by aggregated (or averaged) national statistics which show reduced poverty overall. Goals such as universal primary education, while important, contain the potential for loss of indigenous identity and worldviews, and trauma from discrimination. She suggests:

The issue of poverty reduction and economic development cannot be separately addressed from the issues of indigenous identity and worldviews, cultures and indigenous peoples’ rights ... (Tauli-Corpuz 2005: 19)

She argues that a human rights approach (discussed earlier in this chapter) including rights to land and resources, culture and identity and self-determination is needed to ensure that indigenous poverty does not increase.

¹⁵ Bolivia is an example of an exception.

The international indigenous rights movement does not distinguish between indigenous peoples in Third World and Fourth World contexts. Maybury-Lewis (2002: 46) notes that the rights sought by the UN Working Group on Indigenous Rights indicate the commonalities of indigenous people:

1) self-determination within existing states, 2) protection against genocide, 3) protection against ethnocide, 4) protection of their own cultures, 5) protection of their own institutions of governance, 6) protection of their special relationship to the land, 7) protection of their traditional economic activities, 8) representation on all bodies making decisions about them.

These formed the basis for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 2007) referred to earlier in this chapter.

The importance of self-determination, identified by Tauli-Corpuz and the UN Working Group on Indigenous Rights, is also found by Cornell (2005) who considers the Fourth World position of indigenous peoples in the USA. He sees continuing indigenous poverty as the result of the reluctance of states to address indigenous self-determination. Cornell 2005: 207–208) argues that:

The most consistent predictors of sustainable development on reservations are not economic factors such as location, educational attainment or natural resource endowments but rather political ones.

- Sovereignty or self-rule
- Capable governing institutions
- Congruence between the formal governing institutions and indigenous political culture.

... In short, it is the political factors which either limit or release the potential of economic or other assets.

Cornell's view supports Sen's (1999) argument that poverty reduction is a political process (discussed earlier in this chapter). Cornell's view also challenges Jeffrey Sach's view (2005) discussed earlier that geography (Cornell calls it 'location' and 'natural resource endowments') is a determining factor in poverty.

Cornell provides insight into why nation states struggle with self-determination, which may explain why states, such as Australia, have consented to, yet stalled in, the practice of self-determination (I will discuss this in the ATSIC example (Moreton-Robinson 2007) in chapter three):

[It] challenges state concerns about societal cohesion and universality ('we are all the same') ... It generally undermines the state's ability to tightly control either what happens within its borders or the political order itself, forcing the state to

consider – in at least some areas of political structure – a decision-making partnership. (Cornell 2005: 205–206)

Here, Cornell indicates that self-determination is a threat to both the nation state's self-concept and to its power. The implication is that states like Australia will continue to stall in the practice of self-determination until they find a way to resolve this.

The practice of NGOs

According to Korten (1990), the role of the NGOs expanded during the 1980s due to their expertise in “facilitating complex social and institutional change processes” which the large donor agencies were not able to achieve (Korten 1990: 114). This reflected a wider recognition of the importance of participatory or bottom-up processes to generate and sustain change.

Korten (1990) sees NGOs in relationships with communities which change over time. NGOs form to provide humanitarian relief for the symptoms of poverty, then direct attention to the causes of poverty, first within the community, then outside the community. Eventually the NGO moves to resourcing people's movements, for example, the environment or anti-apartheid movement. He calls these the four generations or phases of NGOs. They are summarised below (Korten 1990: 117):

1. Relief and welfare

The NGO is active and the community is passive. The NGO provides physical humanitarian assistance. The timeframe is short and the focus is on families and individuals. This is crisis management.

2. Community development

The NGO empowers or mobilises the community to 'self-help' through collective action. The timeframe is project based and the focus is on the village. This is capacity building.

3. Sustainable systems development

The NGO is a catalyst for change to systems, institutions and policies outside the community, which the local communities' 'self-help' actions have been unable to

influence.

4. People's movements

The NGO is a resource to people's movements which have an alternative vision. The movements are self-sustaining, self-managing and national or global. The timeframe is indefinite.

Korten (1990) suggests NGOs move through these phases, but in practice they are not mutually exclusive. The aid agencies I will discuss in chapter five added the phases sequentially while they continued the activities of the earlier phase. In Australia the group Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) holds potential as a people's movement.

Community development

Korten's (1990) community development is closely aligned with participatory development discussed earlier, however, its meaning is broader. Community development, as Campfens (1997: 7) observes, can mean social promotion, popular education, liberationist theology, participatory action research, mutual-aid, social support, or empowerment to take social action. According to Korten (1990: 118), community development aims to develop:

the capacities of the local people to better meet their own needs through self-reliant local action ... Commonly the activities involve such village level self-help actions as the development of health committees to carry out preventative health measures, introduction of improved agricultural practices, formation of community councils, digging wells, building feeder roads, etc.

Community development is underpinned by Paulo Freire's (1972) work on the empowerment of oppressed peoples. According to Ife (2002: 124) (and similar to Galtung's (1990) cultural violence described earlier) an important aspect of oppression is that:

the power structures and discourses that legitimise that oppression, for example through the media, the education system, advertising and religious institutions ... can be more powerful and more subtle than control by armed forces, police and security agencies, and is much harder to identify by name, let alone challenge.

Consciousness raising is the process of people exploring and reflecting on their situation in a way which leads to action for change. Ife (2002: 124–126) identifies four simultaneous processes in consciousness raising: linking the personal and the political, establishing a relationship founded on two-way learning and valuing

local knowledge, sharing experiences of oppression and opening up possibilities for action.

Asset-based community development, originally a First World approach, has become increasingly transferred to Third World contexts (Foster and Mathie 2001). Similar to *animation* and the *sustainable livelihoods approach* (discussed earlier in this chapter), it concerns mobilising internal resources. Asset-based community development originated as an alternative to the disempowering narrative created by needs-based planning which emphasises what people do not have. Needs-based planning uses *need* to identify *problems*, which are resolved by providing services to meet basic needs. Needs-based planning is underpinned by the *basic needs approach* discussed earlier in this chapter.

Asset-based community development identifies assets instead of needs, strengths instead of deficits, what exists instead of what is lacking. Assets include material and non-material resources. Non-material resources can include relationships and social networks within the community and outside the community. Assets, once identified, are mobilised “which can activate more formal institutional resources such as local government, formal community-based organizations, and private enterprise” (Mathie and Cunningham 2003: 2). This ‘scales up’ the action, while maintaining local control; it builds community capacity. Asset-based community development changes the role of the NGO from that of a doer, to a broker of external relationships. It challenges “the conventional style of [NGO] operation with its tidy logical frames¹⁶ and result-based planning and management. It requires institutional ability to deal with uncertainty, and to plan inductively” (Mathie and Cunningham 2003: 9).

Mowbray (2005) cautions that *state initiated* community development or capacity building is not about empowerment, but advancing the state’s own position. The romantic use of ‘community’ can be used to depoliticise social problems, which are implied to be free of competing interests. He also argues that the rhetoric of *local development* allows the state to cost shift to local communities, while relinquishing neither resources, control, nor credit for success (Mowbray 2005).

¹⁶ Logical frames, logical framework approach, logframes or program logic will be discussed later in this chapter.

Advocacy

While community development aims to facilitate change within communities, advocacy aims to facilitate change in systems outside communities. Watson (2001: 222–228) identifies NGO advocacy strategies which include:

- the dual strategy of policy influence combined with grassroots organising
- human rights frameworks
- paradigmatic legal cases (e.g. the 1992 Mabo decision in Australia)
- influencing those who influence the system from outside
- alliances with reformers inside the system
- alliances for specialist expertise
- the dual strategy of problem creating (bad cop) and problem solving (good cop).

Watson (2001: 218) notes that different strategies are appropriate for different political systems (e.g. responsive or repressive states). In addition she notes the importance of distinguishing between advocacy in one's own (primary) political space and someone else's (secondary) (Watson 2001: 228).¹⁷

Development in conflict-sensitive contexts

In chapter one I indicated that the *Great Australian Silence* disremembers the violent process of colonisation, and earlier in this chapter I indicated that Aboriginal Australians experience continuing structural and cultural violence, and increasing lateral violence. Aboriginal poverty reduction is therefore situated in a violence-affected or conflict-sensitive context. In *Do No Harm: How aid can support peace – or war*, Mary Anderson (1999) argues that, in conflict-sensitive contexts, aid becomes part of the context and is not neutral. Aid can reduce tensions and increase capacities or it can exacerbate conflict, or both. This can happen through material support (e.g. goods which are stolen and then sold to fund the conflict) or through implicit ethical messages (e.g. policies which apply differently to expatriate and local staff, privileging the expatriates). Mary Anderson therefore argues that aid planning needs to include the analysis of aid's potential impact in order to Do No Harm.

¹⁷ This distinction also applies to research, which I will discuss in chapter four.

The Do No Harm principle is evident in the *asset-based community development* approach (discussed above): it avoids the construction of a disempowering narrative focused on what people do not have. From my perspective Do No Harm is extremely relevant to Aboriginal development in diverse ways, as I will identify in the coming chapters.

Lederach's work (1999, 2005) also concerns conflict-sensitive contexts and draws on community development and psycho-social approaches. He (2005: 42) argues that constructive social change:

seeks to change the flow of human interaction in social conflict from cycles of destructive relational violence towards cycles of relational dignity and respectful engagement.

He discusses the importance of seeing people, relationships and activities in a systemic rather than linear way (which is a characteristic Western worldview).

With a systemic view, we see people and relationships within a context, a social fabric that is dynamic, interdependent, and evolving. We do not place primary focus on pinpointing the cause, as if that sets in motion a linear reaction. We try to understand the overall system and how change in any one aspect will change all the others. (Lederach 1999: 79)

Lederach (2005: 34) describes this as the *art* of peace-building which relies on four common practices: the centrality of relationships, paradoxical curiosity, creativity, and risk.

Paradoxical curiosity is “a quality of interaction with reality that respects complexity and refuses to fall into forced containers of dualism and either-or categories” (Lederach 2005: 36). This is similarly explored in intercultural communication by Bhabha (1995: 209) who describes a ‘Third Space’ where neither worldview is dominant or subordinate and “we may elude the politics of polarity”. It also relates to the *incommensurability* of different worldviews which may not line-up or translate easily to one another, and do not try (Collins-Gearing and Firth 2006).

Lederach's (2005) practices closely match the common qualities which Australian aid agencies identify in their work, although not specific to conflict-sensitive contexts. These common qualities are expressed in the 'NGO effectiveness framework' (ACFID 2004) which resulted from research with the NGOs (Kelly and Chapman n.d.; ACFID 2004). The common qualities are:

- high quality relationships with implementing partners (local NGOs and other organisations), developed "over time, based upon trust, mutual learning, accountability and acceptance of difference"
- long-term engagement, over 10 to 20 years duration which changed over time
- learning through reflection about their work for improvement involving Australian NGOs and implementing partners
- adaptation in response to changed circumstances, requiring flexibility
- working together, in collaboration with other Australian NGOs especially in areas of policy change and advocacy
- risk-taking, including working with marginalised groups where outcomes are less certain (Kelly and Chapman n.d.: 2–3).

The research which developed the framework was managed by the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), now called the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). The research was in response to a concern that "simple tools such as logframe are insufficient to capture the complex and unpredictable dynamics of effective aid and development implementation" (Kelly and Chapman n.d: 1). The logframe (logical framework approach or program logic) is a tool for managing a project cycle which is a common condition of AusAID and other international donor (including World Bank) funding. It requires an analysis of the context or situation, then sets out a 'logic' for planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, with stated goals, targets and indicators. A strength of the logframe is that it demands that the assumptions about cause and effect are made explicit. They are therefore open to scrutiny and challenge. For this it is valued for its rigour. However it has been criticised for its presumption of a closed environment, linear understanding of change, and for its emphasis on measurement at the expense of process (Earle 2003).

Cabrera (2002) considers how relationships within communities are affected by trauma following conflict and disasters. She argues that the 'take' of development

changes because “populations that are multiply wounded as a product of permanent stress lose their capacity to make decisions and plan for the future” (2002: 9). In Nicaragua, she observes:

An incredible amount of money has been spent in this country on programs to build and strengthen institutional capacity ... But the strengthening of an institution is based on mutual trust and that is one of the things that's lost when there is an accumulation of pain and misplaced intolerance and inflexibility. (Cabrera 2002: 3)

Cabrera explains that unprocessed trauma inhibits the ability of community development processes to mobilise people because trauma undermines trust, capacity for tolerance and the flexibility essential for people to work together (2002: 3). Such contexts require “working through personal trauma [in order to transform it] into wisdom for oneself and others” (2002: 9) as a starting point before community development can begin.

July Atkinson (2002) identifies that trauma has been inter-generationally transmitted in Aboriginal Australia, as I will discuss in chapter three.

Conclusion

From this chapter it is evident that there are many theories of international development, rather than one theory or even a coherent body from which approaches to Aboriginal poverty reduction can be drawn. The chapter reveals a field which is highly contested at every level: definitions of poverty, causes of poverty and solutions to poverty.

Among definitions of poverty, exclusion, lack of entitlement and cultural violence are particularly relevant to the Fourth World position of Aboriginal Australians. These definitions reflect the tension between Aboriginal and mainstream Australian worldviews. Despite popular understandings, poverty is neither an economic nor a geographical problem. It is a political problem. I agree with Rowse (2002) and Sen (1999) who in different ways suggest that poverty reduction is increasing the freedom to pursue a lifestyle consistent with one's worldview.

I have surveyed some of the major approaches to poverty reduction in Third World countries since the 1960s. Many of these will be reflected in the literature of

convergence of international and Aboriginal development in the next chapter, and in the discussion of Australian aid agencies' Aboriginal development work in later chapters.

An overarching theme is that poverty reduction is an intervention in a system, whether initiated from the top-down or the bottom-up. This occurs in the context of a *relationship* between a developer (at the top) and a beneficiary (at the bottom). Whether the developer is an international financial institution, a government or an NGO, the developer and beneficiary are in an inherently political relationship in which the developer holds more power and therefore more control than the beneficiary. Conversely the whole premise of participatory development is that beneficiaries have control. Aid agencies attempt to resolve this by re-defining beneficiaries as *partners*, as we shall see in chapters five to seven.

In the next chapter (three) I look at Australian perspectives on Aboriginal poverty and poverty reduction, first from the *insider* perspective of Aboriginal writers, and then as Australian perspectives converge with international perspectives.

Chapter three: Aboriginal poverty: Australian perspectives

Introduction

In chapter two I reviewed a range of ways to understand poverty, and various approaches to poverty reduction in Third World countries from the field of practice of international development. In this chapter I turn to the Fourth World poverty of Aboriginal Australians.

This chapter is in two parts. The first part is a review of literature concerning Aboriginal poverty. I have confined this review to insider views or *indigenist* standpoints. Rigney (1999: 119) uses the term indigenist to describe research which is:

by Indigenous Australians whose primary informants are Indigenous Australians and whose goals are to serve and inform the Indigenous struggle for self-determination.

By relying on indigenist standpoints I am supporting Rigney's call for research which privileges Aboriginal voices and values lived experience (1999: 119).¹⁸ This body of research has been steadily building and now includes, among others, the work of Professor Judy Atkinson, Professor Larissa Behrendt, Professor Mick Dodson, Professor Marcia Langton, Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Noel Pearson and Maggie Walter. While few address 'poverty' by that label (as noted in chapter one), they discuss the interacting historical, political, economic, psycho-social and legal conditions which perpetuate Aboriginal 'disadvantage', and propose how to address it.

The second part of the chapter narrows to focus on literature which brings international development perspectives to Aboriginal poverty reduction. It includes indigenist, international and other Australian perspectives found in academic writing and various aid agency and government reports. This review establishes the extent of the literature which informs, and is informed by, the

¹⁸ Privileging Aboriginal voices will also be discussed in chapter four.

Australian aid agencies' Aboriginal development work discussed in later chapters. This is the literature to which this thesis aims to contribute.

Aboriginal poverty reduction

Poverty plus social breakdown

Noel Pearson (2000, 2001a) writes about his people in the Cape York Peninsula. He argues that since the 1970s the nature of Aboriginal poverty has changed. Until the 1970s Aboriginal communities struggled with poverty, however, since then it has been compounded by social breakdown. Social breakdown is characterised by epidemic levels of substance abuse and violence. The situation is similar in other places in Australia.¹⁹ Langton (2008) describes violence within Aboriginal communities, or intra-community violence as lateral violence. Pearson (2001b) describes how liberal mainstream views reduce Aboriginal justice to an issue between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people which has continued since colonisation. This denies lateral violence. It presents the Aboriginal perpetrator as a victim of colonisation, and prevents restorative justice for Aboriginal victims of lateral violence, further contributing to social breakdown.

Judy Atkinson (2002) looks at the ongoing effects of the violent process of colonisation on Aboriginal Australians. She argues that the violence of colonisation resulted in trauma – that it overwhelmed and challenged people's ability to cope and to heal individually and collectively. She describes how this trauma has been transmitted through generations and argues it is "not possible to understand the lives of Aboriginal people unless we also consider their experiences across generations" (Atkinson 2002: 27). Atkinson also identifies cyclic relationships between violence, trauma and poverty. She indicates the importance of healing from trauma to "break out of poverty cycles" (2002: 234). Atkinson's view aligns with Cabrera's (2002) observation in the international context (discussed in chapter two), that unhealed trauma prevents the 'take' of community development, while healing from trauma enables community development.

¹⁹ For a description of social breakdown see Sutton (2001).

Noel Pearson (2000) argues that social breakdown has been caused by the unintended impacts of the rights movement which continues to be mismanaged. He also identifies three flawed assumptions which contribute to policy confusion in responding to Aboriginal poverty: an assumption of historical dependency; an assumption that colonisation was sufficient to cause social breakdown; and an assumption that before colonisation Aboriginal society was egalitarian and ‘proto-communist’.

The first flawed assumption is that Aboriginal people were made dependent during the early period of colonisation. The Aboriginal economic position is seen to be unrelated to the ups and downs in demand for unskilled labour in the Australian economy. The inference is that Aboriginal people will progressively modernise and engage in the economy; in the linear way progress implies. Pearson (2000) points out that Aboriginal people have less engagement with the Australian economy now than in the 1960s, caused by two simultaneous trends. The first is the rights movement. Equal wages resulted in job losses including the whole cattle industry in Cape York; and entitlement to welfare payments created what Pearson calls a *gammon economy*²⁰ removed from livelihood. The second trend is that Australia’s economic growth in the 1970s required less labour in rural areas, and progressively less unskilled labour in rural and urban areas. Aboriginal autobiographies testify to ongoing economic engagement before this period in rural and urban NSW (Cohen 1987; Langford 1988). Government policy documents confirm the negative impact of rural decline on Aboriginal employment (Castle 1987).

A second flawed assumption follows from the first: “that our social problems are the legacy of racism, dispossession and trauma [of colonisation] and that our chronic welfare dependency is the end result of these social problems” (Pearson 2000: 38). Historical analysis shows that colonisation was necessary but not sufficient for social breakdown – that the critical factor in social breakdown was welfare dependency. Historical analysis before the 1970s shows that, despite colonisation, Aboriginal communities adapted and engaged with the mainstream economy. They were impoverished but did not experience social breakdown.

²⁰ *Gammon* in my understanding from Aboriginal use in Redfern, means joking, pretending or ‘bullshit’.

Figure 3.1 represents the logic of the flawed assumption, and historical analysis of the situation before and after the 1970s.

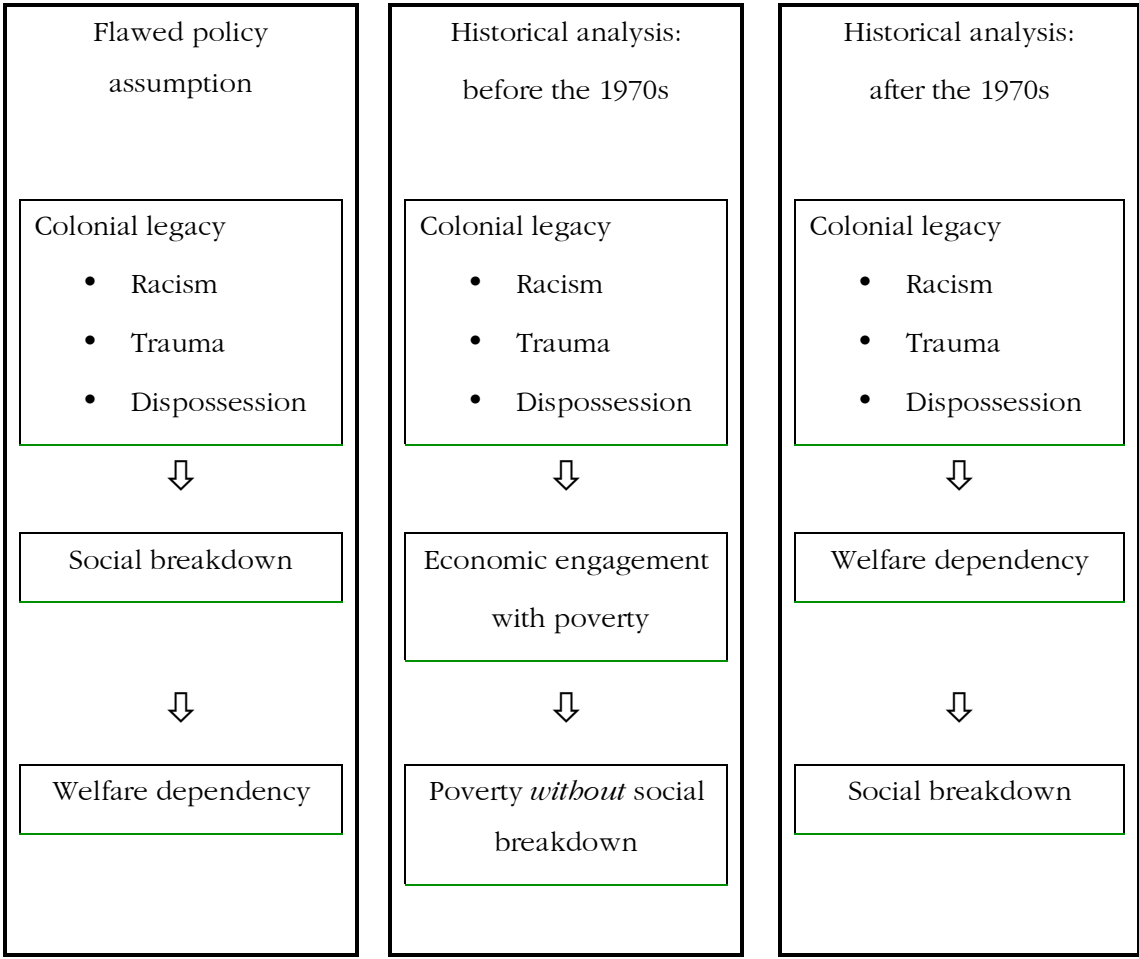


Figure 3.1: Pearson's logic

Relationship between welfare dependency and social breakdown

Source: Adapted from Pearson (2000)

A third flawed assumption regards the nature of Aboriginal communities. “The government seems to base its mode of resource delivery on a ‘proto-communist’ model of Aboriginal society: a flat, homogenous grouping, where common interests and the common good are pursued as a matter of course” (Pearson 2000: 47). I learnt through experience this did not match reality. Pearson (2000: 47) responds that “we are not simple communitarians” and that policy must fully consider “issues of diversity, equality, individualism and related questions of reward, incentive, achievement and distinction”.

Pearson sees the problem with urgency, as the social breakdown increasingly impacts on each generation. “The reduction of Aboriginal people to fringe

dwelling beggars whose only economic option was charity from whites was a prescription for genocide” (Pearson 2000: 29).

Walter suggests an alternative view of welfare dependency. She argues that in thinking on Aboriginal poverty “causality is illogically reversed” (2007: 162).

“Welfare dependency is depicted as a source of social and economic marginalisation, rather than marginalisation seen as enforcing welfare dependency” (Walter 2007: 162).²¹ Her argument is represented in Figure 3.2.

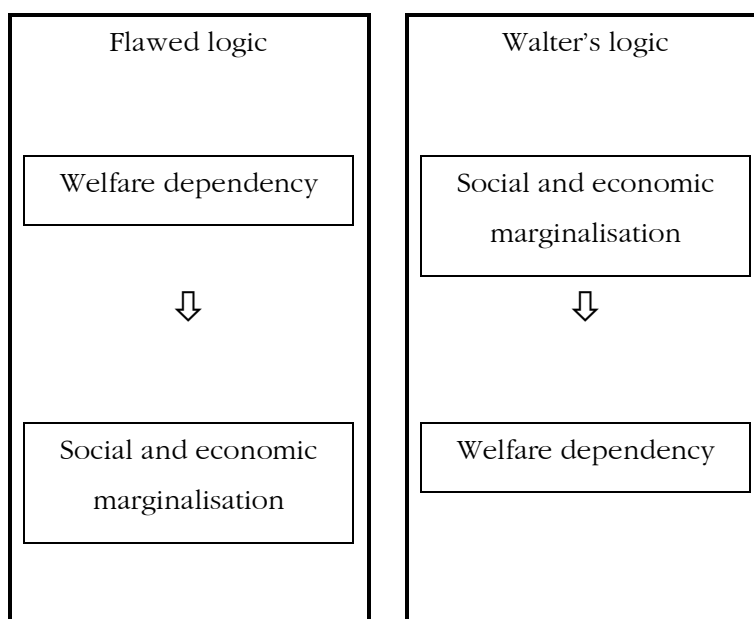


Figure 3.2: Walter's logic:

Relationship between marginalisation and welfare dependency

Source: Adapted from Walter 2007

Pearson (2000) argues that the way forward hinges on a transformed relationship between Aboriginal Australians and governments founded on self-determination and autonomy. This includes a shift in thinking away from rights (a passive position of entitlement), to responsibilities (an active position) which assumes Aboriginal seniority in partnership with governments. This is not a ‘pull yourself up by the bootstraps’ responsibility, but responsibility outside the thinking of current government frameworks. The role of the government in the partnership then shifts to responding to Aboriginal responsibility through providing resources to enable Aboriginal directions to be implemented.

²¹ There are parallels with the increased physical exclusion of Palestinians as they became surplus to Israel's economy during the 1990s (Klein 2007: 423–442).

Self-determination and sovereignty

Behrendt (2003) argues that Australia's contentious race relations have prevented the formal rights won by the rights movement from delivering social justice. Aboriginal poverty cannot be addressed in the context of different views of history because they produce different understandings of present reality. "It is only when we understand how the ideologies of colonialism have permeated today's institutions that we can begin to break the grip of the historical legacy" (Behrendt 2003: 8). She observes (2003: 82):

Formal equality does not work while inherent discrimination and cultural conflict within existing institutions are not addressed. Nor does it work while the focus is on equality of opportunity and fairness of process rather than equality of outcome.

Behrendt's (2003: 85) argument that "[s]eemingly neutral laws perpetrate injustice" resonates with the discussion in chapter two about Galtung's (1990) concept of structural violence and Bryant and Kappaz's (2005) mechanics of social exclusion.

Behrendt (2003) notes that mainstream Australia has difficulty understanding Aboriginal identity. She describes Aboriginal identity as shaped by shared cultural heritage together with shared experience of colonisation and ongoing discrimination, while mainstream Australian identity is shaped by denial of invasion (Behrendt 2003: 70–80), or the *Great Australian Silence* I noted in chapter one.

Behrendt (2003: 82–83) also describes how, when the rights of the Aboriginal people are recognised, Western institutions struggle with whether the individual or the group is the rights holding entity. I see this reflected in government enterprise development initiatives that tend to support Aboriginal organisations representing groups or 'communities', rather than support individuals or families.²² The idea of a 'proto-communist' model of Aboriginal society identified by Pearson (2000) (discussed earlier) legitimises the Western institutions' conferring of rights to the

²² Foley (2006: 3) notes:

Within Indigenous economic development programs there is an almost blanket understanding that communities (a loosely defined group of people, or possibly not defined at all: a mere administrative convenience) are targeted for funding whereas specific individual Indigenous entrepreneurs ... are often not considered in the equation or are rarely mentioned.

group. The ‘proto-communist’ model may well continue long past its use-by date because it conceals this struggle over the rights holding entity in Western thinking.

Self-determination, as discussed in chapter two, is identified in the international literature as critical for indigenous peoples in order for them to have autonomy within the nation states which have encapsulated them through colonisation (Tauli-Corpuz 2005; Maybury-Lewis 2002). Behrendt (2003) identifies that self-determination and sovereignty are recurring themes in the political aspirations of Aboriginal Australians. She argues that sovereignty will require the transformation of Australian society to include a new national self-image and mechanisms for Aboriginal regional autonomy (2003: 132–168).

Moreton-Robinson (2007) considers Australian policy attempts at Aboriginal self-determination. In particular, she explains that ATSIC (1990–2005), which was “presented to the world as the epitome of self-determination” was effectively constrained, and that its demise was the government response to ATSIC commissioners challenging the constraints. She (2007: 4–5) describes:

[R]egional councils did not have autonomous control over expenditure in their regions, and ATSIC’s budget was controlled and monitored in the same way as other government departments. ATSIC commissioners were ‘developing’ policy prepared by bureaucrats who worked within the confines of the government’s overall policy on indigenous affairs. When the ATSIC commissioners did change the policy agenda under the stewardship of Geoff Clarke, from one of self-determination involving decision-making, to a self-determination model that advocated indigenous rights, the newly elected Howard government, in concert with the media, represented the commission as being mismanaged, misguided and ineffective.

According to Moreton-Robinson (2007), government implementation processes since the 1970s subverted self-determination policies into self-administration. The difference between self-determination and self-administration has been explained elsewhere as the difference between deciding whether to collect the garbage, or what night to collect the garbage.²³

Impact of ‘neo-liberalism’

Walter (2007) considers the impact on Aboriginal policy of the diminishing autonomy of nation states. Since the 1990s nation states, as a condition of global

²³ Stephen Cornell of the Harvard University’s Project on American Indian Economic Development (pers. comm. 31 October 2009).

economy participation, have had to “alter their aims, political agendas, and public and social policies to facilitate an enabling framework for global capital” (Walter 2007: 156). Australian governments, regardless of political ideology, have subscribed to “the core neo-liberalist commitment [of] ... minimising the role of the state and maximising that of the market” (Walter 2007: 158). This has reduced autonomy and therefore the sovereignty of Australia as a nation state.

It has led to “market solutions-based policy” to address Aboriginal poverty (Walter 2007: 161). This is the context within which ATSIC was producing policy, referred to by Moreton-Robinson (2007) above. It considers government-funded provision of services to Aboriginal people as a market for competition.

The broader impact of neo-liberalism is that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This generates a backlash, not against the rich but against those poor seen as relatively privileged or on ‘easy street’ – Aboriginal Australians and migrants receiving ‘special treatment’. Walter (2007: 155–156) sees this impacting on Aboriginal Australians in two ways:

First, the erosion of state sovereignty diminishes the state’s capacity to acknowledge within-state Indigenous sovereignty. Second – and perhaps more critically – under the economic, social, political and cultural processes ... the potential for, and reality of, the further undermining of Indigenous sovereignty have been intensified.

Walter (2007) argues that Aboriginal claims for self-determination *compete* with market supremacy. As I write this I am aware of a tinge of conspiracy theory. However I have watched the impact of ‘national competition policy’ on community-based organisations in Australia over the last 20 years. During this time it has been clear that market supremacy, implemented through tendering, competes with local community development. I see the more recent emphasis on ‘capacity building’ as now trying to ‘purchase’ (ironically by tender) what the community-based organisations did by their existence – resource the development of local communities. Morphy and Sanders (2001) have documented the role of the CDEP scheme, for example, in developing local communities and contributing to regional leadership.

Ideologically informed policy versus evidence informed policy

Mick Dodson (2006) sees recent mainstreaming of Aboriginal affairs and the rhetoric of ‘mutual responsibility’ as reminiscent of assimilation policies officially abandoned in the 1970s. He describes [the then Howard government’s] Aboriginal policy as occurring in a “complete knowledge vacuum” (Dodson 2006: 10) without either corporate memory or general knowledge of Aboriginal issues. This resonates with Pearson’s (2000) claim about ongoing policy confusion.

Dodson (2006) finds parallels between international guidelines for engagement with indigenous peoples and the Australian evidence of what works in Aboriginal development. Principles common to both are:

respectful engagement processes in communities; transparent and open decision making; inclusive processes of participation; and an acknowledgement that including people in decisions that affect them will be more successful. (Dodson 2006: 17)

These ideas are taken up again in the discussion of the convergence of international and Aboriginal development literature in the second part of this chapter.

Discussion

There is agreement in the literature that Aboriginal poverty is experienced in the context of increasing welfare dependency, social breakdown, trauma and exclusion or marginalisation. Which came first, or their causality is, however, contested. There is agreement that Aboriginal control, expressed variously as regional autonomy, sovereignty and self-determination, is the only effective way forward. This reflects the same premise as participatory development – that beneficiaries have control of the development process. As the Australian policy environment is increasingly influenced by neo-liberalism, the opportunities for increasing Aboriginal control are diminishing. The inability of the state and other institutions to find ways to reduce their power or control is a major stumbling block for Aboriginal poverty reduction. To that extent, Aboriginal poverty is a problem of *Whiteness* referred to in chapter one.

Convergence of international and Aboriginal development literature

In chapter two I discussed approaches to poverty reduction in the Third World, and noted that Marcia Langton (2002) applies dependency theory to Aboriginal poverty. In this chapter so far I have considered indigenist perspectives on Aboriginal poverty. I noted that Mick Dodson (2006) draws on international guidelines for engagement with indigenous peoples, and the significance of indigenous sovereignty in both international and Aboriginal contexts. I now review the literature that brings international perspectives to Aboriginal poverty reduction. This review is not a complete historical account. I focus on recent work beginning in the late 1990s. In recognition that the convergence has roots in the decolonisation period after the Second World War, I have also included the work of Rowley (1970, 1971, 1972).

The tradition of community development

Following the Second World War Australia administered the ‘territories’ of PNG, Nauru and others, together with the NT. This produced common approaches to development including training at the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA) for specialist teachers for PNG and for Aboriginal schools in the NT. Independence for PNG, brought forward to 1975, demanded Australian investment in development, rather than maintenance of the colonial administration. C.D. Rowley, principal of ASOPA from 1950–1964, later drew heavily on comparative analysis to produce three volumes on Aboriginal development policy and practice (Rowley 1970, 1971, 1972).

Rowley (1972) argues for some type of Aboriginal autonomy, across Australia, and for government negotiation with Aboriginal people. He makes frequent references to Australian development experience in PNG, and suggests a community development approach to facilitate leadership, re-establish social control and develop Aboriginal corporations. Today this would be called civil society.

Rowley provides two examples of Aboriginal community development. In Alice Springs, NT, the activity has the following path (1972: 53–54):

- a community development change agent initiates discussion

- people's representatives come together (committee with a majority of Aboriginal people from many language groups)
- committee identifies problem (there is nowhere for social activities except the pub which leads to problem drinking)
- committee resolves to collaborate to achieve the end, despite their differences
- committee forms a club
- community development agent facilitates, but does not lead
- community development agent learns the (most commonly) spoken language
- other agencies contribute resources to support the agenda (e.g. church provides a hall as an alternative venue for social activities).

Rowley (1972: 54) evokes the principle of Do No Harm (discussed in chapter two) through the observation that the activity provided “a small spark of hope; dangerous in that hope denied adds to frustration, yet indicating the one way out of the social impasse”.

The beginnings of the Pindan movement in the Pilbara, Western Australia (WA), provide another example. Between 1946 and 1953 the Pindan movement improved mining wages and conditions, formed a mining company, reorganised socially (including kibbutz-style kids' camps), and bought a pastoral property and a home for outpatients in town. Rowley (1972: 254) indicates that cultural adaptation accommodated old and new imperatives, for example “new patterns of leadership were worked out, balancing the interests of the Pindan movement, traditional Law and kinship ties”. This provided the protection of a new legal and economic system behind which the community could form a new social system. Rowley (1972: 258) also observes that “all this happened in a social framework of which no government administrative body could ever remain fully aware, much less in control”.

The examples reflect the same process as Rahman's (1993) description of *Animation*, initiated by a change agent which I discussed in chapter two.

Sustainable development

In *Third World in the First*, Young (1995: 260) compares the situation of Aboriginal people in Australia and Canada who are:

culturally and economically separate, with geographic and socio-economic characteristics more similar to those of many developing nations than to the industrialised countries to which they belong.

She (1995: 3) asks two questions:

- Why have the many attempts to promote Aboriginal development failed?
- What alternative forms of development might be attempted?

According to Young (1995), the First World meaning of development is modernisation, industrialisation, and economic growth regardless of the environmental or social impacts or the inequity of benefits. Modernisation assumes assimilating 'primitive' peoples. She argues that development has had negative impacts on Aboriginal people who have not shared the benefits and have been marginalised through the process. Young (1995: 3–4) suggests the Third World or Fourth World meaning of development is “a process which provides not only their economic advancement but also their social and cultural vitality and which emphasises long term sustainability rather than short term gain”.

Young (1995: 12) argues for replacing economic growth with *sustainable development* which is holistic. In her holistic approach “the people (the social system), their means of survival (the economic system) and the environment (the biological and resource system) are integrated”. What is needed, according to Young (1995), are systems aimed at total development; she notes that historically this is exactly what has not been attempted.

Although Young confines her study to remote areas, I am prompted to ask: Could the holistic approach still apply in rural and urban areas where the process of colonisation has largely denied Aboriginal access to lands and resources? In other words could a holistic approach which integrates the social system and economic system *without* the biological and resource system, apply in urban and rural areas?

Young (1995: 85) proposes that economic development be:

based on the principle that, at community level, economic activity should be small scale, based on local physical and human resources and operated in such a way that the community supports it.

Community perspectives on the CDEP scheme described in Morphy and Sanders (2001) provide evidence in urban, rural and remote areas to support her view. With hindsight, it is clear Young's (1995) proposal directly conflicts with neo-liberalism's supremacy of free market competition (Walter 2007) discussed earlier in this chapter. Many of Young's ideas are reflected in the *sustainable livelihoods approach* discussed in chapter two.

Community development revisited

The *Review of the Indigenous communities of Doomadgee and Palm Island: Final Report* (Dillon Report) (2000) concerns two communities in far north Queensland. Colin Dillon, then the ATSIC National Commissioner, undertook the review at the request of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. It recommends that the government adopt a community development approach in these communities. Palm Island was established as an Aboriginal prison in 1918. Its current population is at least 1,981 (ABS 2007: 41). The Doomadgee Aboriginal community was created by the forced centralisation of smaller reserves in northern Queensland. The Doomadgee community was moved to its present site founded by Christian missionaries in 1936. Its current population is at least 1,089 (ABS 2007: 36). Problems in these communities reflect poverty, social breakdown and lateral violence (discussed earlier in this chapter). The Dillon Report (2000: 9) describes these as:

a wide range of health related matters; chronic unemployment; insufficient and inadequate housing; insufficient infrastructure; a proliferation of community organisations competing for limited financial resources; and tensions over land tenure and other family related issues.

Community Aid Abroad (CAA, which later became Oxfam Australia) participated in a working group which informed the review. The working group also included the Centre for Appropriate Technology, University of Queensland's School of Social Work and Social Policy (Tony Kelly) and senior ATSIC staff (Dillon 2000: 117).

The Dillon Report is highly critical of government approaches which "perpetuated a cycle of dependency rather than alleviated it" (Dillon 2000: 2).

Governments must recognise that, for all intents and purposes, these communities have similar problems to other developing, or fourth world communities (developing communities within first world nations), and as such have complex

developmental needs that cannot be met through the existing, rigid service delivery approach of government agencies. (Dillon 2000: 2–3)

Dillon (2000: 31) takes the position that:

The needs of the residents of these and other Indigenous communities are largely developmental in nature and that strategies aimed at addressing these needs must be designed to stimulate and facilitate sustainable development. Conversely we consider any attempt to address the needs of these communities through a mainstream ‘first world’ service delivery approach is highly unlikely to produce long-term sustainable results.

The report suggests that the government has received this advice before. It cites the ATSI Regional and Community Planning Review 1993, the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the 1989 National Aboriginal Health Strategy, and various community reviews which endorsed community development or empowerment approaches.

The Dillon Report documents how the practices of government conflict with the implementation of community development and empowerment approaches. It describes the community councils of Doomagdee and Palm Island as mainstream governance structures which work against the Aboriginal decision-making process, regardless of the capability of Aboriginal people elected to them. It finds councils are hampered by government accountability and reporting requirements. In chapter two I described Cornell’s (2005: 208) case for “congruency between formal governing institutions and indigenous political culture”. It is certainly missing in Dillon’s description of these councils.

The report also identifies the government’s approach to meeting basic human needs (described in chapter two) as problematic:

A big part of the issue is that planning to meet ‘needs’ is much more complex than simply attempting to catalogue what ‘things’ are required and then supplying them as efficiently as possible. (Bill Sheldon cited in Dillon 2000: 76)

Dillon is critical of the neo-liberal process of government tendering, which effectively guarantees that the services (including labouring on building projects) will be delivered by outsiders. It finds government funding processes generally did not assess community support of proposals; integration with existing projects; nor develop meaningful performance indicators.

The report recommends that government “adopt an approach which concentrates on people development rather than mere service delivery” (Dillon 2000: 115). It concludes that:

a community development process is urgently required to assist the Doomadgee and Palm Island communities to identify their issues and their aspirations, and to establish a platform for the development and implementation of strategies to address them. (p. 34)

The report recognises that government cannot undertake effective community development:

Although government agencies should have an understanding and appreciation of development work and development processes, they are not equipped (staffed or skilled) to initiate the development process ‘on the ground’. (Dillon 2000: 125)

This resonates with Rowley’s (1972) observation, noted earlier in this chapter, that government is not able to control community development processes.

Dillon (2000: 126) observes that Australian aid agencies are able to provide experience in “development work in troubled, dysfunctional or disadvantaged communities right across the world”, and suggests that the government access this resource through:

formal partnerships between agencies involved in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs portfolio at both Commonwealth and State/Territory levels, and NGOs involved in the delivery of development programs both here and abroad. (Dillon 2000: 127)

Dillon sees this as providing communities with access to the support of experienced development workers, and a platform for awareness raising at both a community and government level (Dillon 2000: 126).

In 2001 ATSIIC, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad and Centre for Appropriate Technology jointly commissioned the international development practitioner and academic Arjuna Parakrama, based in Sri Lanka, to provide an international perspective on Aboriginal development issues in five communities across Western Australia, Queensland and South Australia. The review identifies similar issues to the Dillon Report. In addition Parakrama notes the frequency of Aboriginal communities in financial or other crisis. He argues that these crises warrant preventative interventions and government responses which do not have further negative impacts.

Parakrama (2002) proposes a community development activity – a two-year pilot to train, resource and support activist or change agents in two communities. He suggests they be trained in participatory techniques, development processes, analytical skills and organisational skills, and that project monitoring and evaluation processes be developed and implemented through participatory processes. Systematic documentation would capture the successes and failures.

Gender

Questions of gender and development have received most attention from international observers – Gray and Ziauddin, authors of an Oxfam International investigation report *The Rights of Indigenous Australians* (2000), and Parakrama (2002). Gray and Ziauddin (2000: 24) indicate that Aboriginal women:

- experience decreasing life expectancy
- are more likely to be victims of domestic violence than men
- experience impacts of social breakdown differently to men
- are more affected by government education policy changes (e.g. to *Abstudy*) because women are more likely to be mature aged students than men
- are more affected by the welfare trap²⁴ because women are more likely to be single parents than men (single parent families represent a third of Aboriginal families).

As noted in chapter two, the Gender And Development approach considers the different impacts activities have on women and men, and on their relations with each other (Momsen 2004). Parakrama's initial community development activity proposal (above) suggested women and young people be the activists or change agents. However he observes that community consultations indicated consensus to include men (Parakrama 2002). This consensus could be for many reasons; men may hold the locus of power and to withhold the activity from men would risk failure, or men may experience greater alienation and therefore to withhold the activity would lead to further alienation.

²⁴ The welfare trap is the policy disincentives to escape poverty. It is discussed again in the context of micro-enterprise later in this chapter.

These reports indicate that gender analysis may need to consider two distinct contexts. One context is the mainstream policy environment in which Gray and Ziauddin (2000) identify the welfare trap which affects all Australians. I believe a more rigorous analysis of government assistance to low income, two parent households would identify that the welfare trap extends beyond single parent families. It also effects second income earners in two parent low income households, who are more likely to be women.

The other context is the Aboriginal environment in which Gray and Ziauddin (2000) suggest differential impacts of social breakdown, and Parakrama (2002) indicates the importance of sensitivity to the gendered nature of power between Aboriginal women and men.

Capacity building

Four significant documents address capacity building or capacity development²⁵ specifically in relation to Aboriginal development:

- ATSIC's (2001) internal discussion paper *Changing Perspectives in ATSIC: from service delivery to capacity development*
- HOR's (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs) (2004) *Many Ways Forward: report of the inquiry into capacity building and service delivery in Indigenous communities*
- Hunt's (2005) *Capacity Development in the International Development Context: implications for Indigenous Australia*
- Makuwira's (2007) *The Politics of Community Capacity-building: contestations, contradictions, tensions and ambivalences in the discourse in Indigenous communities in Australia.*

The community development approaches advocated in the Dillon Report were revisited under the name capacity development in an ATSIC internal discussion paper (2001): *Changing Perspectives in ATSIC: from service delivery to capacity development*.

²⁵ In this thesis I use the terms 'capacity building' and 'capacity development' interchangeably.

The paper draws on international development theory of capacity development, and cites publications of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Canadian International Development Agency, industry journals and academic works. It notes the lack of improvement in the quality of life of Aboriginal Australians during 30 years of Aboriginal Affairs departments while at the same time overseas:

there has been a global revolution in development thinking and practice during the 1990s, not necessarily matched in ATSIC. Overall, agencies are shifting their focus from the provision of services such as technical assistance to long-term, sustainable capacity development. (ATSIC 2001: 6)

In contrast in Australia, however, successive governments have lost sight of the self-determining community development perspective of the 1970s, which was informed by the international decolonisation process after the Second World War. Government funding of Aboriginal organisations to provide Aboriginal services created dependence on permanent service delivery (either delivered or constrained by external agencies).

What distinguishes capacity development from service delivery is its holistic nature, and its suggestion that individuals, families, and organisations have a definite and active part to play in the process – rather than as passive recipients of services. [Sustainable development] recognises the importance of thinking about individuals, organisations, programs, policies, etc, as part of a broader whole rather than as discrete, or loosely connected concerns ... (ATSIC 2001: 7)

Capacity development emphasises process elements, where service delivery emphasises technical elements. Process, or soft elements, include access to choice, participation in planning, access to decision making and social and personal change. Process is evaluated by impact. Technical or hard elements are delivered through programs including housing, health, employment and education. They are evaluated by outputs. Capacity development does not have predetermined outputs which puts it at odds with government frameworks for delivering programs. The paper concludes that a capacity development approach would require the transformation of ATSIC from being ends-focused (delivering services) to means-centred (partner in a process).

Following the ATSIC discussion paper, an Australian parliamentary inquiry produced the report *Many Ways Forward: report of the inquiry into capacity building and service delivery in Indigenous communities* (HOR 2004). The capacities of government agencies, Aboriginal organisations and communities

were considered. Unlike the Dillon and Parakrama reviews, it was not restricted to specific communities. It was open to broad input and produced a more inclusive discussion informed by diverse Aboriginal representatives, many government agencies, and local and international perspectives. These included the perspectives of the Fred Hollows Foundation (2002) and Oxfam Community Aid Abroad (2002).

Many Ways Forward (HOR 2004) notes that recommendations for the government to adopt a community development approach date back to 1989. It expresses disappointment that there had been little change in the fifteen years since another parliamentary inquiry had found the:

need for [government] field staff ... to shift their focus from individual clients and programs to the linkages between programs and their place in achieving the development goals of communities. Field staff in a sense must become facilitators of community development rather than administrators of programs. (cited in HOR 2004: 10)

Many Ways Forward identifies competing understandings of the term ‘capacity building’, noting that government agencies, using and redefining the term, were borrowing from international development. It cites the UNDP definition as:

The process by which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives, and to understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner. (UNDP cited HOR 2004: 14)

Many Ways Forward cites Oxfam’s position that capacity building “is about community development and is essentially a political process” (Oxfam cited in HOR 2004: 13). It also identifies debates about whether capacity building aims to satisfy external or internal agendas (HOR 2004: 12).

Hunt (2005) reviews the lessons from international development’s capacity building for Aboriginal Australia. She argues that “many of the capacity ‘problems’ in Indigenous community governance stem from a disabling, rather than enabling environment or system” (p. 18). In other words, the wider systems in the mainstream environment constrain Aboriginal capacity development.

Hunt discusses international studies which point to the importance of the cultural and psycho-social aspects of development. When the development relationship is cross-cultural, between Western developers and non-Western beneficiaries, there is “a need for much greater attention to the cultural and cross-cultural elements ...

and the importance of not assuming that Western approaches will work anywhere” (Hunt 2005: 15). She also notes that when the society of the beneficiaries has experienced trauma, that its impact on current capacities provides a different starting point for development (Hunt 2005: 14). This resonates with two ideas discussed earlier: the importance of addressing trauma as part of the development process (Cabrera 2002) (in chapter two), and the relationship between Aboriginal poverty and inter-generational trauma (Atkinson 2002) (in this chapter).

Hunt (2005: 26) concludes that Aboriginal capacity development will be enabled by “a significant change in the non-indigenous systems which frame the way Aboriginal institutions and communities operate, and limit their powers”. She suggests some of these changes would be a “genuine shift in power” from non-Aboriginal to Aboriginal people, long-term timeframes, and greater priority on “intangibles, the ‘soft’ capacities – the processes, values, behaviours, networks and approaches to learning and dialogue” (Hunt 2005: 26).

Makuwira (2007) sees capacity building as the very processes which shift power, not as conditional on a shift in power as suggested by Hunt (2005). He argues that in effectively segregated societies, all sections of society are powerless. While Aboriginal Australians are understood to be powerless victims, so are “policy makers ... whose actions perpetuate powerlessness” (Makuwira 2007: 134).

Capacity building, according to Makuwira, therefore requires finding “a middle ground” for dialogue. For this to happen there needs to be change on both sides, for example, consciousness raising among Aboriginal Australians, and mainstream recognition “that Indigenous people have a knowledge system” (Makuwira 2007: 134) or, as I suggested in chapter one, a worldview which is legitimate.

Micro-enterprise

The Grameen Bank micro-credit model, developed in Bangladesh and adapted all over the developing world, is considered to be one of the great success stories of international development. McDonnell (1999) examines its replicability in Aboriginal Australia. She concludes that, while the key elements appear to be transferable, there are problems. Two of the problems raised are relevant to this discussion.

Welfare payments, by providing a safety-net, provide an alternative to the micro-enterprise program and maintaining loan repayments. In addition the structure of Australian welfare payments creates a welfare trap. McDonnell (1999: 11) also suggests that “cultural practices such as reciprocity may affect the ability to operate businesses within some indigenous communities”. While she cites studies from remote areas to support this, there is conflicting evidence from urban areas. Foley’s (cited in HOR 2005) discussions with successful Aboriginal entrepreneurs in cities found they knew “when and how to say no”. This highlights the dangers of universalising Aboriginal cultural practices from one people and place to another.

In 2000 ATSIC approached the micro-enterprise aid agency, Opportunity International Australia, to run a pilot project in north-eastern NSW (Coffs Harbour, Grafton, Lismore and Casino). Opportunity International then conducted the *Many Rivers Opportunities* project, producing a report in 2004.

The report concludes that (contrary to earlier suggestions) “properly contextualised programs combined with sound government policy and support from the private sector can deliver” (Opportunity International 2004: 2–3). It shows government investment in micro-enterprise generates tax revenue and savings in welfare payments which far exceeds costs. It also notes flow-on effects to the community including skills transference and some wage labour. The report identifies inhibitors to micro-enterprise as market-based discrimination against Aboriginal workers and businesses; lack of access to finance for investment; lack of education and training in business; and the welfare trap (Opportunity International 2004: 7–8).

The welfare trap is the policy disincentive to incrementally increase income because the more you earn the more you lose.

[W]hen a welfare recipient’s market income increases, he/she loses welfare entitlements and pays increased taxes, so that the net addition in income as a person moves from welfare dependence to income earning may be very little. A concept called the ‘effective marginal tax rate’ (EMTR) is used to measure this effect. (Opportunity International 2004: 9)

The pilot conservatively calculated participants’ EMTR at between 74% and almost 100%. In other words at best the participants were able to keep 26% of their

additional income, and some only just broke even (Opportunity International 2004: 9).

Human rights approaches

As mentioned in chapter two, in 2000 the UN adopted the MDGs which aim to reduce poverty by half in Third World countries by the year 2015. In 2005 a global campaign to 'Make Poverty History' was launched in the UK in support of the MDGs. In Australia in 2005 a campaign 'Make *Indigenous* Poverty History' was initiated by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC n.d.a: 1).

The HREOC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, also sees implications in the MDGs for Aboriginal poverty reduction. In the *Social Justice Report 2005* he argues:

It is ironic that the Government has committed to contribute to the international campaign to eradicate poverty in third world countries by 2015, but has no similar plans to do so in relation to the extreme marginalisation experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. (HREOC 2005: 40)

The *Social Justice Report 2005* presents a plan of goals, timeframes and resources to achieve equality of Aboriginal health outcomes within a generation. This plan was then taken up in the *Close the Gap* campaign which I will discuss in chapter five.

Both the MDGs and the *Social Justice Report 2005* are based on a human rights approach. In Australia this contrasts with contentment with an incremental, "slowly getting there" approach (HREOC 2005: 77). The report notes that this latter approach "constitutes a threat to the very survival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples" (HREOC 2005: 79). In other words, policies of incremental change represent genocide.

The human rights approach in the *Social Justice Report 2005* emphasises state accountability, participation, and recognition of cultural needs. Although focusing on health it does not propose a compartmentalised approach. It endorses the holistic Social Determinants of Health approach based on the work of Wilkinson and Marmot (2003) adopted by the World Health Organisation. The Social Determinants of Health approach considers the underlying non-medical factors in

the social environment which affect health and wellbeing, such as stress, social exclusion, work, unemployment, social support, food, addiction and transport.

Communities in crisis and failed states

Discussion of Aboriginal development took a 180° turn from community development and capacity building when the failed states approach was applied to Aboriginal 'communities in crisis' which concerned Parakrama (2002). In contrast to community development and capacity building which are bottom-up and empower beneficiaries, the failed states approach is the epitome of a top-down approach, which imposes external control.

Failed states, in international development, are those "where the government cannot – or will not – deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor" (Anderson 2005). According to AusAID (2006) failed states tend to stay that way for a long time and have little chance of improvement without outside intervention. Further, traditional aid approaches do not work because institutions are too weak, therefore "new, non traditional ways to provide and coordinate in these environments" are needed (AusAID 2006: 17).

According to journalist Nicholas Rothwell writing in the *Australian*, the 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) is underpinned by an assumption that:

Aboriginal Australia is a failed state within the nation: a view that almost invites the emergency-response model developed by Australia for the Solomons ... This then, is a theory driven package. (Rothwell 2007: online)

Dillon and Westbury (2007) describe the Australian government as a failed state, rather than the remote Aboriginal communities implied by the NTER. They argue that the rhetoric of Aboriginal self-determination has allowed the Australian government to structurally disengage from remote Aboriginal communities (Dillon and Westbury 2007: 44).

While Indigenous communities (sometimes) exercise delegated responsibilities for service delivery, they are not sovereign entities. The appropriate comparison is between the weak nation states and the Australian government with jurisdiction over remote Australia. These Australian governments reflect and operate on the basis of 'western' values and norms are based on western assumptions. (Dillon and Westbury 2007: 46)

There is a failed state in remote Australia, but its causes are not similar to those which apply in the weak states in the arc of instability [i.e. which are Third World states, not Fourth World] ... dysfunctional indigenous communities, poor indigenous governance practice, and poor community capacity ... form the rationale for the recent Australian Government intervention. Yet such suggestions ignore the long-standing and cumulative failure of governments to engage substantively with remote Australia. (Dillon and Westbury 2007: 47)

Oxfam's (2008a) submission to the government review of the NTER draws on the Do No Harm principle. It documents unintended consequences, potential damage to community resilience, and the opportunity cost of directing resources more effectively. Oxfam contrasts the NTER policy with international development and emergency humanitarian relief 'good practice' principles of participation; transparency; capacity to redress; and monitoring, evaluation, learning and adjustment (Oxfam Australia 2008a: 13). Dodson's (2006) comparison of Aboriginal development with international indigenous guidelines discussed earlier in this chapter makes this same point.

The NTER was foreshadowed by the government's Communities In Crisis Policy (2003–2007) which was implemented in selected remote communities identified by the government. A crisis in a remote community can threaten not just wellbeing, but also the main food supply if the only store closes. Consultants SGS Economics and Planning (SGS) were commissioned to evaluate the policy. The evaluation (SGS 2007: 14) describes the Communities In Crisis Policy as a "narrow set of short term and primarily administrative responses [which] failed to expressly identify how crisis fundamentally relates to broad scale indigenous disadvantage". It suggests that such "disjointed and competing plans, programs and projects are more likely to sustain a crisis than to resolve it" (SGS 2007: x). The Communities In Crisis Policy therefore failed to Do No Harm.

The SGS evaluation proposes an alternative approach to communities in crisis. This is based on the recognition of the need for a long-term development approach, the transitional nature of development, and the influence of external and local factors. It identifies qualities of planning, equity, empowerment and sustainability, which are integrated with five foundations of stable development:

- governance
- physical infrastructure
- health services

- education services and
- economic security and development (SGS 2007: 10).

Suggestions for exploration

Hunt (2006) agrees with Dillon and Westbury (2007) that remote Aboriginal communities are not like failed states because they are not sovereign. Hunt also identifies (2006: 5-7) other lessons from international development which may be relevant as:

- robust analysis
- a trans-generational timeframe
- having realistic objectives and being willing to take higher risks
- promoting law, order and governance
- strategies which foster local ownership and participation
- involving women and undertaking proper gender analysis
- understanding incentive structures
- working together
- employing and retaining the right people
- maintaining basic services and meeting humanitarian needs
- identifying the reform-minded in the community
- developing a strategy and providing the necessary resources to build capacity
- development of greater jurisdictional control
- establishing agreed partnership performance goals and jointly monitoring them.

Discussion

The convergence of international development and Aboriginal development thinking is not recent. Since the post war period it has included attention to community development, sustainable development and capacity building which all focus on bottom-up development consistent with increased Aboriginal control. It is alarming that as early as 1989 (cited in the Dillon Report 2000) government reports have been endorsing community development approaches and yet policies have maintained dependency and have become increasingly authoritarian.

It is even more alarming that policies which undermine existing local control and citizenship rights have found an 'evidence base' in international development through the rhetoric of failed states. This highlights the risk of inadequate attention to contextual differences between Third World and Fourth World contexts, in this case sovereignty. It also indicates the degree to which policy makers (with the media largely following) are able to suspend logic in order to pursue an ideological agenda.

The transference of approaches such as micro-enterprise indicates that adaptation or contextualisation is needed. The transference also highlights that the First World welfare system contains policy disincentives to escaping poverty creating a welfare trap which captures not only Aboriginal Australians. As Gray and Ziauddin (2000) note this affects Aboriginal women and children differently to Aboriginal men.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that indigenist perspectives about Aboriginal poverty and the convergence of Aboriginal and international development thinking share a common theme. They indicate, in one way or another, the connection between poverty and powerlessness, and that one reinforces the other. They also indicate that addressing Aboriginal poverty requires increasing Aboriginal power. This means that mainstream institutions must find ways to manage sharing power with Aboriginal Australians. Moreover there is an urgency to do so, since the ongoing failure to respond effectively to Aboriginal poverty amounts to genocide.

This chapter also argues that limitations to the transference of international development approaches to Aboriginal contexts have not been subjected to rigorous analysis. Policy makers have ignored the lack of Aboriginal sovereignty required for the failed states analogy to apply, while others have suggested limitations on the basis of a particular Aboriginal context (remoteness) (McDonnell 1999) which does not extend to all other contexts (Foley cited in HOR 2005).

In addition, Australia tolerates increasing inequity amongst all Australians, and is complacent about policy disincentives to escape the welfare system. Aboriginal Australians are disproportionately affected by these policies, and Aboriginal women and children are affected differently to Aboriginal men.

This thesis adds to the literature which converges international and Aboriginal poverty reduction by exploring Australian aid agencies work in/with Aboriginal Australia. In the next chapter (four) I set out the methodology I used to explore that work, and discuss why that methodology was appropriate.

Chapter four: Research methodology

*“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies,
but the silence of our friends”*

Martin Luther King Jr.

Introduction

In this chapter I set out the research process. I explain why I chose the space and site of the research, and how the methods relate to the research question. I also discuss ethical concerns in Aboriginal research. I explain how the research progressed and deviated from the planned design. I explain when and how the data was collected, recorded and analysed. Finally I reflect on the UNE ethics approval process for research concerning Aboriginal people.

Pre-research learning and site of the research topic

In chapter one I described how my interest in the research topic began when I worked briefly for an Australian aid agency with Aboriginal communities in regional NSW in 2000. I see Aboriginal development, international development, and community development as intersecting circles (Figure 4.1). The intersection of Aboriginal and international development, incorporating some community development, is the site for this research.



Figure 4.1: Intersections of Aboriginal, international and community development

I approached this research with certainty and with hesitation. I was certain that Aboriginal poverty is *not* inevitable and that Australian policy harbours a double standard between responses to international poverty and Aboriginal poverty. I was certain that non-Aboriginal Australians have a responsibility to act against Aboriginal poverty. I was hesitant that research could provide an effective way for me to act. The questions *Could I? Should I? Why would I do this research?* have been my constant companions. The terrain for the research has been carefully negotiated. Despite this I know that a white woman with anything to say about anything Aboriginal can be seen as presumptuous, audacious, claiming to be an expert, and trading off (self-promoting at the expense of) Aboriginal Australians. To those I say I am damned if I speak, and damned if I remain silent.

I knew the research would be on ‘tricky ground’ (Smith 2005) before I started. I had been working in community development and Aboriginal development for 20 years. Those were years of learning. They left me with self-imposed conditions about how to approach this research. For instance I did not want to perpetuate the “disproportionate fixation” with remote Aboriginal Australians identified in chapter one. For the research, this meant avoiding a remote focus. It meant respecting and identifying difference among Aboriginal people. It meant not treating Aboriginal Australians as *they* or *other* who are *all the same*. I also wanted a research design which did not impose on Aboriginal Australians. I did not want to take up people’s time and energy to find out things I could learn elsewhere. I did not want to ‘mine’ Aboriginal people for the data. I found this sentiment echoed by Jackie Huggins (cited in Australia Council 2007: 14) who advises non-Aboriginal people writing on Aboriginal themes: “Do some homework first ... You should never expect Aboriginal people to do all the education because it’s unfair and a personal drain”. Equally I wanted a research design that did not disconnect from Aboriginal Australians. I wanted to engage with Aboriginal perspectives on the data and analysis, in contrast to Aboriginal people *being* the data. I was also aware that my desire for collaboration was potentially an “unwitting imperialist demand” (Jones and Jenkins 2008: 471), and that this would need negotiation.

Aboriginal research literature, ethics and guidelines

I found many of these and other ideas expressed in the Aboriginal research literature which informs the ethical conduct of research. The Aboriginal research literature concerns its past, present and future. It is part of and consistent with the growing international indigenous literature which positions research as a tool of racism and imperialism and yet as a potential means “to find solutions to the negative impacts of colonialism” (Smith 2005: 91). Rigney (2001: 8) describes this power of science to colonise *or* contribute to decolonisation as “the journey of academic contradiction”. In this sense *ethical* Aboriginal research is “research which takes sides” (Boughton 2001: 11). It is objective in its methodology, while biased in its purpose.

Three themes in this literature resonate for the ethics of my research: Aboriginal control of the Aboriginal research agenda; the role of insiders (Aboriginal Australians) and outsiders (non-Aboriginal Australians) as researchers; and the implications of different knowledge systems (Aboriginal and Western).

Aboriginal control of the Aboriginal research agenda

Aboriginal control of the Aboriginal research agenda is critical for research to benefit Aboriginal people, rather than be about Aboriginal people (Foley 2003; Rigney 2001; Smith 1999, 2005). Some disciplines are beginning to articulate research agendas. Publications such as *The Impact of Racism on Indigenous Health in Australia and Aotearoa: Towards a Research Agenda* (Paradies, Harris and Anderson 2008) give direction to future health research. More often the Aboriginal research agenda is not an explicit list.²⁶

Insiders and outsiders

The question of Aboriginal control of research extends to asking who has the right to research (Rigney 2001; Smith 1999) when “non-indigenous Australia cannot and possibly will not understand the complexities of Indigenous Australia at the same level of empathy as an Indigenous Australian researcher can achieve” (Foley 2003: 46). At the same time, dividing the world into opposites – black/white, insiders/outside – is limiting. Rigney (1999: 119) notes that “there is no automatic

²⁶ I discuss how my research topic contributes to an Aboriginal research agenda later in this chapter, despite the difficulties of identifying that agenda.

or natural rapport between Indigenous Australians” and that being Aboriginal does not make a person free of colonial internalisation. Insiders and outsiders can also be transient positions made by situations rather than identity. Smith (1999: 137–138) describes how researching her contemporaries transformed her *in that interaction* from an insider to an outsider. Rigney (1999) provides a way forward from the limitations of outsider/insider oppositions. He (1999: 119) argues for the privileging of Aboriginal voices which values lived experience, and not for the exclusion of “critical research by non-Indigenous Australians”.

Different knowledge systems

At the heart of discussion about Aboriginal research ethics is difference. Foley (2003) characterises Aboriginal philosophy as the interaction of the physical, human and sacred worlds, implicitly contrasting the compartmentalisation of Western approaches. Smith (1999: 42–57) describes Western ideas of how humans relate to the world and beliefs about space, time, and the individual and society as particular to the West and not universal. Aboriginal and Western ways of knowing, being and doing – Aboriginal and Western worldviews – are not the same, as noted in chapter one.

In research, as elsewhere, these differences co-exist, compete and at times are in conflict. All knowledge systems are connected to power. “Some [indigenous] knowledge can be gained only by its being given” (Smith cited in Jones and Jenkins 2008: 481), and which person is entrusted with knowledge, is significant. This contrasts with Western knowledge systems which rest on the idea of the “ultimate *accessibility* and *knowability* of things” where researchers have an “*entitlement* to an accessible and shared terrain of knowledge” (Jones and Jenkins 2008: 481). These tensions have not been resolved, and as Rigney (2001: 2) describes “Indigenous peoples remain dissatisfied with scientific philosophies and practices that underpin Western knowledge systems”.

Ethics and the Aboriginal research guidelines

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) have produced guidelines about the conduct of research concerning Aboriginal

people. The guidelines give effect to the concerns in the Aboriginal research literature. They are:

- *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies* (AIATSIS 2000)
- *Values and Ethics: guidelines for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research* (NHMRC 2003).

At UNE the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) and its subcommittee, the Panel on Ethical Research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (PERATSI), ensure that research is consistent with these guidelines. My research was granted HREC approval.²⁷ I discuss some reflections on the poor fit between the ethics application process and the space of my research at the end of this chapter.

Comparative and qualitative approach

The research topic is fundamentally a comparison of poverty reduction approaches in international and Aboriginal development. According to Havemann (1999) comparative methodology can “provide some perspective on one’s own context from the knowledge of what occurs elsewhere and so avoid ethnocentrism”. It can also “provide conceptual frameworks to assist with policy analysis, both for predicting outcomes and for advocating reform” (Havemann 1999: 2). These are reasons for using a comparative approach for my research topic.

Ethnocentrism is evident in Australia, as Larissa Behrendt (2003: 5) describes:

Ironically, it appears often easier for Australians to see the context and legacies of conflict in other countries rather than their own ... [The] connection between past and present seems to be a difficult conceptual leap, even when the links have been set out clearly.

I believe this ethnocentrism is reflected in Australian policy. I agree with Anderson, Baum and Bentley (2007: x) who point out that:

In the past few years, and particularly since the publication of the *Little Children Are Sacred: Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse 2007*, policy debates in the Australian media have presented Aboriginal issues as if they were unsolvable and intransigent and caused by ‘deviant’ characteristics inherent in Aboriginal communities.

²⁷ Human Research Ethics Committee Approval no: HEO7/153 granted 3 October 2007.

My perspective is that such thinking has been an undercurrent in Australia for decades and has only been exposed in the final years of the Howard government (ending in 2007). The view of Aboriginal as 'deviant' connects with two ideas discussed in chapter two. The first is that social exclusion is the punishment of Aboriginal Australians for 'deviance'. The second is that modernisation as an approach to development concerns Westernising Aboriginal Australians, thus solving the problem of 'deviance'.

There is an increasing body of knowledge which compares indigenous development between First World countries for example Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Similarly, there is increasing literature about indigenous development inside Third World countries. I decided not to focus on indigenous development, although I did not exclude it. I wanted to draw on the widest body of knowledge, international development, for two reasons. First, international development provides the greatest catchment for fundamental principles or lessons. Second, international development *does not* assume the subjects of development are marginalised within their countries, a common experience of indigenous peoples. This decision reflected my suspicion that the marginalisation (the assumption of deviance) of Aboriginal people in Australia is part of the problem to be dealt with in order to address Aboriginal poverty.

The research is exploratory. It aims to find out whether there are lessons from international development for Aboriginal poverty reduction in Australia, what contextual factors may affect their transfer, and what some may be. In Australia there has been limited intentional experience of the transfer in practice to date. Internationally the field of international development as a source of lessons continues to grow. Therefore the research can only be exploratory. A qualitative approach suits exploratory research.

Sarantakos (1998: 55) indicates that a qualitative approach provides the opportunity to build theory. It allows for openness and flexibility, and to consider the interconnections in a holistic way. A qualitative approach suited my learning style of learning by listening and asking. In contrast a quantitative approach provides an opportunity to test theory, is closed, and studies elements or variables.

I had reasons to avoid quantitative methods which measure things. The first was that my professional experience had led me to mistrust the reduction of lived experience to numbers.²⁸ The second was my appreciation that quantitative methods were implicated in research which had justified colonialism by ‘proving’ racial inferiority.

The research space: Australian non government aid agencies

I was drawn to take a closer look at Australian aid agencies (international development NGOs) by my work with an aid agency which had begun my research journey. Many, although not all, Australian NGO aid agencies work in both international development and Aboriginal development. Government agencies also work in international development, for example AusAID, but do not work in Aboriginal development. Other NGOs work in Aboriginal development for example Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, and may have expertise in international development but I had no way to identify which ones.

While I was not familiar with aid agencies specifically, I was very familiar with the family of NGOs to which they belong. These range from small, locally controlled grassroots organisations to large, externally controlled QANGOs (Quasi Autonomous NGOs). Fisher (1997) characterises NGOs as values driven organisations, in contrast to profit driven or politically driven organisations, although under pressure to be co-opted into both. They are also characterised as flexible and comfortable with calculated risk-taking in a way which government is not (Fisher 1997: 442). I would add that NGOs, compared with the government and corporate sectors, are generally reflective organisations – more transparent in their successes, willing to air and learn from their failures, and open to student researchers as an additional resource in this process.

The choice of aid agencies also reflected my strengths and limitations. I knew little about the practice of international development and more about the practice of Aboriginal development and community development in Australia. This meant I needed a research design that would identify (both pinpoint and name) relevant international development approaches in practice.

²⁸ Sen's *Development as Freedom* (1999) caused me to review this.

As a non-Aboriginal researcher, an outsider, I wanted to avoid researching inside Aboriginal 'space'. The concept of primary space and secondary space used in advocacy can be applied to Aboriginal research:

[Primary space is] an arena in which a given group is located (community, region, country) and where the actions by that group will benefit its members. Secondary space is an arena outside of one's own primary space, where advocacy will benefit another group, but not the advocate directly. (Watson 2001: 228)

NGO aid agencies represent a secondary space and therefore an appropriate space for the research.

The planned design: Case studies and industry triangulation

In May 2006 while considering the research design I travelled from Armidale, NSW, to Melbourne, Victoria, to visit the national offices of World Vision and Oxfam. I wanted to find out if similar research was already underway, if they thought the proposed research questions were useful, and if they would consider participating in the research. The response was positive. I wrote at the time:

Both NGOs are interested in my research topic – and indicate they spend a lot of time wrestling with it. Encouragingly they think I'm on the right track – and confirm that the work hasn't already been done. Also they pointed me to a few recent sources (conference papers and policy docs) which will help enormously. They mentioned an ACFID [Australian Council for International Development] working group on indigenous issues [see below] which meets in Canberra, and has guest speakers etc. – which could be very useful. (Field notes: 6 May 2006)

The visit established relationships with people who would support the research over its duration. It also provided valuable referrals to documents, individuals and other relevant agencies. I was particularly interested in the ACFID working group mentioned above. ACFID is an Australian association or peak body of international development NGOs. ACFID's website described the purpose of the Indigenous Working Group as:

to share approaches to working with Indigenous communities amongst ACFID members and others and to influence government policy on Indigenous issues. The group meets 3–4 times face to face per year. (ACFID n.d.: para 1)

From experience with NGOs I understood that industry working groups are often 'think tanks' where common concerns are articulated and debated. They provide an opportunity for professional development, peer support, critical reflection and

direction setting. While they do not aim to develop a uniform position, if consensus were to be arrived at, this is where that would happen.

Informed by these early investigations, I established the following research design:

- detailed case studies of the work of World Vision and Oxfam using documents and semi-structured interviews with up to three managers in each agency
- participant-observation at meetings of the ACFID Indigenous Working Group between September 2007 and June 2008.

I reasoned that aid agency case studies would provide depth through detail while the ACFID Indigenous Working Group would provide breadth from many agencies to triangulate – to validate or deviate from the detailed case studies.

I was mindful of matching the research design to time constraints. Exploratory research can be ‘as long as a piece of string’ while the Masters research program was scheduled to be two years part-time. My experience consulting with NGOs is that designs which assume certain levels of NGO co-operation, time commitment and the existence of and access to documentation, need to be flexible in the real world of limited resources and competing demands. The ACFID Indigenous Working Group meetings had been held over two days with many travelling and staying overnight to attend. This seemed an opportunity for informal conversations outside the time demands of a normal working day.

Case studies allow researchers to “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events” (Yin 2003: 2). As mentioned in chapter one, much of what is written about Aboriginal development is not holistic, but compartmentalised into disciplines which do not reflected the interconnectedness of lived experience. According to Yin (2003) case studies are useful “when you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions – believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study” (Yin 2003: 13). I considered the contextual conditions of Aboriginal poverty – a First World country – to be the crux of the issue.

I chose each aid agency’s total Aboriginal activities as a ‘case’ rather than specific activities because I wanted to identify any and all principles, policies and practices which crossed over. This directed me to aid agency managers who design, monitor

and evaluate Aboriginal activities, rather than workers at the grassroots level who implement them. It avoided the complexities of conducting the research in Aboriginal space (particularly in the role of a fly-in fly-out researcher) mentioned above. It limited travel to head offices in capital cities, avoiding the costs of a potential national tour of each agency's various activities. With hindsight, attention to head offices also meant I did not miss activities which were conducted in spaces which could not be visited. Advocacy campaigns, industry development activities, and youth leadership activities do not occur in one 'community' in a discrete geographical place – in the same way this research does not occur in one 'community' in a discrete geographical place.

I used the ACFID Indigenous Working Group to lead me to other agencies involved in Aboriginal development work. Caritas Australia²⁹ and the Fred Hollows Foundation were active in the working group alongside World Vision and Oxfam. I did not assess the activities of these agencies. I was mindful that secular agencies (Oxfam and the Fred Hollows Foundation) and Christian agencies (World Vision and Caritas) be represented but that neither dominate the case studies, as it was possible there were significant differences in their approaches.³⁰ I selected Oxfam and World Vision as case studies for pragmatic reasons. They had indicated interest in the research when I visited Melbourne in 2006, and they are the agencies most easily recognised by the Australian public. I hoped to build on their recognition to capture the widest audience for the research findings. In July 2007 I wrote to Oxfam and World Vision asking them to be case studies for the research. They agreed.

I chose participant-observation at ACFID Indigenous Working Group meetings because it provided a broader perspective. It could indicate if the case study agencies were representative of the aid agencies generally or if there were additional issues which were not raised in the case studies. I wrote to the ACFID Indigenous Working Group in July 2007 asking to attend future meetings for the purpose of the research. ACFID was also supportive.

²⁹ In this thesis Caritas Australia is referred to as Caritas.

³⁰ The complex relationship between Christian churches and Aboriginal Australians is noted in chapter five.

The real world design

Thematic analysis of aid agency sources

As with development practice itself, the research design required flexibility. I took advantage of opportunities which I could not have foreseen at the outset, and abandoned plans which had relied on factors outside my control. Although this extended the research duration³¹ and made the process more challenging, it also reflected the 'real world' and was not unfamiliar.

My letter to the ACFID Indigenous Working Group was fortunately timed. Aboriginal development was a theme at the coming ACFID Annual Congress in September 2007 in Canberra. ACFID invited and sponsored me to participate in the Congress. Professor Larissa Behrendt addressed the Congress. She encouraged the assembled Chairs and CEOs of Australian aid agencies to work to reduce Aboriginal poverty – independent of government policy changes and informed by research (Field notes: 19 Sept. 2007; Behrendt 2007: 5). This confirmed that my research topic corresponded with an Aboriginal research agenda – one of the themes in the Aboriginal research literature discussed earlier in this chapter.

The ACFID Congress also included a workshop titled *Creating links between overseas development and the indigenous sector*. It was described on the Congress program:

There are important common features between the community-based work of development and indigenous agencies and some ACFID members are actively building the links between the two sectors through their day to day work. Former ACFID Executive Director Janet Hunt will facilitate an exchange of views about ways for interested agencies to develop a direct connection with indigenous issues and about ways in which we can all promote improved links across the sectors. (ACFID 2007: 3)

This workshop included presentations by Oxfam's Executive Director and Caritas' Australian Indigenous Program Coordinator. Professor Larissa Behrendt provided further comment and Janet Hunt facilitated discussion. It was a concurrent session and those attending overflowed the space allocated (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007). The presentations generated lively and challenging discussion, reflecting that working in partnership with Aboriginal Australians is more complex than is often

³¹ Agency documents accessed after December 2008 were not included in the data. This provides consistency with period described in interviews with participants.

presented (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007). It provided valuable direction for the research.

In December 2007 I conducted face-to-face interviews with participants from Oxfam and World Vision in Melbourne. Interview participants were selected for their role in the agency: as managers of the Aboriginal programs, policy or advocacy. My decision to conduct the interviews face-to-face was consistent with my understanding of indigenous protocol, or what Smith describes as “the seen face, that is to present yourself to people face to face” (Smith 1999: 120).

I conducted separate interviews with two Oxfam representatives, and one interview with two World Vision representatives. World Vision participants were interviewed together because one was no longer employed at the agency and the other provided an agency representative at the interview.³² Interviews were semi-structured. A semi-structured face to face interview allowed us to engage in conversation which covered the questions, but was open so participants could raise other relevant issues. Consistent with exploratory research, I assumed my questions were a starting point for discussion.

The semi-structured interviews were guided by five questions. Each participant was provided with the questions at the time they were invited to participate in an interview. The questions were:

- What principles, policies and practices from international development do you use in your work with Aboriginal communities?
- How is that the same and different from your organisation’s work in developing countries?
- What affects the transferability to Australian Aboriginal contexts?
- How does locality play out within Australia? In what way does urban, rural, and remote context make a difference?

³² At the time I arranged the interviews in Melbourne another potential World Vision participant (who I had met during my earlier visit) was on extended leave.

- Do you think there are implications or lessons from your work for future Australian policy and practice?

In March 2008 I reviewed the data I collected in the previous 8 months. It was thin. The ACFID Indigenous Working Group had not yet met. I had been given fewer internal documents than I expected, but the agency websites had provided more than I expected. I had conducted about half the number of interviews I had intended. On the plus side I had valuable data from the presentations and discussion at the ACFID Congress *Creating Links* workshop.

I needed more data so I expanded the number of aid agency cases to three by including the Fred Hollows Foundation. The Foundation was a younger organisation than Oxfam and World Vision and had a different history in Aboriginal development.³³ Perhaps this would provide a counterpoint to the data from the other aid agencies.

In April 2008 I conducted separate interviews with two participants from the Fred Hollows Foundation in Sydney. These interviews differed from the Oxfam and World Vision interviews in two significant ways. One way was that participants were identified and referred through my research networks. This was based on their extensive experience in Aboriginal development before working for the Foundation, rather than their role in the Foundation's Aboriginal activities. Both participants had been reflecting on *the crossover* in many roles during careers in development practice, not just in their current roles. They had an agenda – there were things they wanted me (the researcher) to know. As a result these semi-structured interviews were directed by the participants to a greater extent than earlier interviews. The other way these interviews differed from earlier interviews is that I followed up the ACFID Congress *Creating Links* workshop discussion and asked about the complexity of partnerships in Aboriginal activities.

These differences represented a methodological change. I was now involved in a continuous dialogue about development practice, rather than considering each agency's work separately. It would need a resolution, but at that time I did not know how.

³³ These histories are discussed in chapter five.

The ACFID Indigenous Working Group met in April 2008 by teleconference, approximately a year after its last meeting. This was exceptional as the pattern had been quarterly meetings. It may have been due to changes in staff within the aid agencies represented on and convening the Working Group. I was invited to take part in the teleconference but was unavailable. Instead I provided the meeting with a brief partial analysis of the Oxfam and World Vision interviews for information. Feedback confirmed the analysis but challenged its representativeness for aid agencies overall.

The next ACFID Indigenous Working Group meeting was scheduled for June 2008 in Sydney. It was cancelled due to lack of numbers. The meeting was to consider the group's role and purpose, which again suggested there had been significant membership turnover. The remaining agenda was dominated by researchers seeking input from the group: one proposed, one completed, and one in progress (mine). I attributed the lack of numbers to a poor fit between:

- new membership in a group primarily representing non-Aboriginal aid agencies
- an agenda dominated by researchers seeking input about Aboriginal topics.

When the meeting was cancelled I abandoned the plan to include the ACFID Indigenous Working Group in the research.

In May 2008 I had the opportunity to meet with one of the contributors to the discussion at the ACFID Congress *Creating Links* workshop. From my perspective this person had responded with the greatest insights from the floor. When we met I tabled the same five questions which had guided earlier interviews. The questions served to disclose my thinking and informed a conversation about broad issues as well as those arising in the *Creating Links* workshop discussion. With consent, the meeting was voice recorded. I have identified this as personal communication (pers. comm. ACFID member) in the findings presented in chapters six and seven.

I now had a workable amount of data about the work of aid agencies from what had become a continuous dialogue. I replaced the case study method with a thematic analysis of data from all participants (hereafter meaning interview

participants and the ACFID member with whom I had personal communication) combined with aid agency documents. I was increasingly aware of the risk that case studies could be interpreted as a comparative evaluation of each agency's work (Field notes: 14 May 2008). I wanted to compare international development work with Aboriginal development work, not aid agencies with each other. Changing from case studies to a thematic analysis of data from all aid agencies involved, resolved this.

Background of the participants

As the preceding discussion indicates, the way I selected participants changed as the research progressed. What participants had in common was broad experience in both aid agencies and in Aboriginal development.³⁴ Aboriginality was not a criterion for selection, although it was possible that those with experience in aid agencies and in Aboriginal development would be Aboriginal. I specifically asked this of each participant because it would allow the privileging of Aboriginal voices, discussed in the Aboriginal research literature earlier in this chapter (Rigney 1999: 119). None of the participants was Aboriginal.

Recording, verifying and presenting participants as data

In adherence with the requirements of the HREC of UNE I provided written information about the research to participants to ensure informed consent.³⁵ This information assured participants they would not be named. In the following chapters participants have been linked with the agency they represented, but not identified by name, position or gender. There was tension between the anonymity required and promised, and a sense of reciprocity I owed to participants. Allowing an avenue for promotion of their agencies' activities (given that their income relies on promotion), and applying Do No Harm to the agencies' reputation, was the minimum reciprocation for their time and their trust. I feel I owe them much more.

With the written consent of participants, all interviews were voice recorded with a digital device which was unobtrusive once I got it to work. Interviews took between 45 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes. All interviews were transcribed or

³⁴ Further characteristics of the participants as a group will be described in chapter six.

³⁵ The Participant Information Sheet is provided in Appendix C.

noted from the voice recordings and a written record returned to each participant for verification. Five of six participants responded.

When the analysis was complete I sent excerpts to these five participants for verification. I hoped to provide transparency and accountability to participants for the analysis, however it was compromised by the delay (of over a year) between the interviews and the final written analysis. Three participants responded and the text was changed to reflect their comments.

Documentary sources

The largest documentary source was the aid agency industry, and most documents were available on their websites. These included but were not limited to annual reports, submissions, newsletters, reviews and evaluations, plans, and job advertisements. In addition some agencies provided a limited number of internal documents not otherwise available.

I found the MURA catalogue of the AIATSIS a source for documents about the history of aid agencies' work. I also contacted four individuals identified through research networks who had been personally associated with the history. Personal communication through emails, telephone calls or meetings gave me a fuller understanding of the past, and also provided referral to relevant aid agency and government documents.

During the course of the research I followed the ongoing media debates relevant to Aboriginal poverty through subscription to the ANTaR News List.³⁶ This service emails subscribers with media comment, press releases and other documents on Aboriginal issues. It allowed me to track public debates throughout 2006–2009. This period was not without controversy. It witnessed:

- the Howard government's implementation of a mono-policy of mainstreaming Aboriginal affairs following its abolition of ATSIC
- the Howard government's refusal to sign the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 referendum

³⁶ The ANTaR News List archive is available at http://antarqld.org.au/03_news/news.html.

- the Howard government's NTER
- the *Close the Gap* campaign
- the Rudd government's apology to the Stolen Generations
- the Rudd government's promise to *Close the Gap*
- the Rudd government's signing of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- the Rudd government's review, then continuation of the NTER
- the Rudd government's lack of action on its *Close the Gap* promise
- the Rudd government's lack of action to re-establish an Aboriginal representative body to replace ATISC.

The proliferation of data this produced and to which it referred me was enormous, and after the announcement of the NTER it was overwhelming. However it provided access to Aboriginal voices, often directly from press releases. Many of these validated the themes which emerged during the analysis. Although I did not formally analyse this data, the archive certainly could provide data for a further research project.

Analysis of the data

I relied on data from participants to develop themes. This process called thematic analysis involved reading paper copies of interview and personal communication notes and transcripts. I wrote comments on paper copies (coding). I grouped similar codes into themes. I then sectioned the texts (cut paper with scissors) and collated similar themes together into piles. I went through each pile and divided them into sub-themes. Then I re-read the agency documents and coded them in the themes from the data from participants. I added excerpts from these documents to the earlier piles.

This process analysed only the manifest-content and not latent-content in the data. According to Boyatzis (1998: 16) manifest-content is the visible or apparent content, while latent-content is "the underlying aspects of the phenomenon under investigation". A re-reading of the texts and comparison with the literature revealed latent-content.

In the findings chapters (six and seven) I use quotes from interviews and aid agency documents as an analytical tool to present key findings. I have critically analysed the quotes, but I have not employed critical discourse analysis. This was a conscious decision because it is appropriate that exploratory research by a non-Aboriginal researcher allow diverse readings to emerge with each reader. In the final chapter I have drawn the main findings together in a critical analysis.

At the outset I had planned to seek relevant Aboriginal perspectives on the analysis as part of the research process and to include these in this thesis. This was ambitious given the time bound nature of thesis production, and the flexibility needed for such a process. It has become clear that this will be more appropriate as a second step, outside the time and documentary constraints of thesis production, using the thesis as a discussion document.

Reflections on the ethics approval process

The NHMRC (2003) guidelines mentioned earlier in this chapter identify and illustrate values to guide the conduct of Aboriginal research: reciprocity, respect, equality, responsibility, survival and protection, spirit and integrity. I was comfortable with these values. They could easily be describing my understanding of Aboriginal development practice.

As described earlier, at UNE the PERATSI committee determines whether Aboriginal research is 'ethical' in accordance with these values. I found the procedure it required difficult. An example: the written application form asks for evidence of 'appropriate community support', and of 'community members' influencing the design. My topic did not focus on a discrete geographical place, or locatable 'appropriate community'. Aboriginal support for my research topic and design was neither formal nor current. It was ongoing over years during my undocumented relationships and undocumented learning in Redfern, Sydney, and in northern NSW.

I believed the research had the implicit support of Aboriginal leaders who were working in practice and advocacy. One had been my boss years earlier when, as mentioned above, I worked briefly for an aid agency with Aboriginal communities. The other had initiated the Australian 'Make *Indigenous* Poverty History' campaign

a few years later. Both were living and working in Sydney, and both belonged to 'communities' hundreds or thousands of miles north. Both were also Christian ministers. Although they were undisputed leaders I did not expect that PERATSI would see them as speaking for 'the community', given the complex relationship between Aboriginal Australians and Christianity. This contributed to one of many crises of confidence I experienced during the research.

I was more concerned with how I would ensure the input of relevant Aboriginal perspectives to verify or veto my analysis. As a postgraduate student my supervisors monitor and validate the analysis of the research. My supervisors, like me, are non-Aboriginal. They, like me, bring relevant and valuable perspectives. And they, like me, have limitations. There is an institutional expectation that non-Aboriginal supervisors can safeguard the analysis of non-Aboriginal students. I believe this is more responsibility than they should be asked to bear.

I struggled with the ethics process and wrote an application which sacrificed integrity to expediency. The process provided a significant diversion during the research process, and yet it resonated with one of the research findings. Western institutions proceduralise processes in order to administer them. In doing so the values which the procedure attempts to operationalise may become lost in translation.

The findings in chapter seven suggest there is a common critical success factor in Aboriginal and international development work: that it operates in a space between Western worldviews and Aboriginal worldviews – a neutral territory where relationships, comfortable with difference rather than procedures, are primary. This neutral territory has been called *incommensurable* – the space between two worlds which do not line up and do not try (Collins-Gearing and Firth 2006) noted in chapter two. Finding, creating and sustaining this space cannot be proscribed by Western institutional processes – not for ethical safeguards in universities, nor for development activities in aid agencies as I will discuss in chapter seven. It is situational. It requires flexibility. It requires trust and faith. It is based on relationships built between individuals, and then between communities and organisations.

Judy Atkinson (2002: 20) says that “Aboriginal worldviews consider that the activity of learning introduces a responsibility to act with integrity and fidelity to what has been taught”. If I were anticipating an ethics process based on Aboriginal worldviews I would expect to be asked one question, face to face: ‘What have you learnt and how are you going to be true to what you have been taught?’

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explained the methods and processes used in the research. I have paid particular attention to ethics and identified concerns that are not isolated to research but pervade Aboriginal development, and vice-versa. This was shown in relation to research as an advocacy strategy, and in relation to tensions between Aboriginal knowledge systems or worldviews and Western knowledge systems or worldviews.

In the next chapter (five) I focus on Australian aid agencies. I locate the contemporary Aboriginal activities of the agencies in a broad historical context, and then the activities of three agencies in their organisational context, identifying the complexities and tensions which they present. This provides a foundation for the discussion with development practitioners which I will explore in chapters six and seven.

Chapter five: Context of aid agencies' Aboriginal development work

Introduction

The work of aid agencies, 'doing good', is a complicated business. In this chapter I explore some of the tensions in the work. This provides a bridge between approaches to development discussed in chapters two and three and the Australia aid agencies' Aboriginal development work which I will discuss in chapters six and seven.

In this chapter, I first explore the environment of Aboriginal development work for the aid agency industry looking at its historical and current position. This locates contemporary work in a social, political, economic and religious context. I identify that the work has a controversial past, with critics outside and inside the aid agencies, albeit for ideologically different reason. I also identify the current tensions for aid agencies in Aboriginal development work – in their relationships with government and with Aboriginal communities. I then consider how three aid agencies (World Vision, Oxfam and the Fred Hollows Foundation) transfer international development approaches to their work generally and to an Aboriginal context. This provides the foundation for the discussion with development practitioners from these agencies which will be explored in chapters six and seven.

The context of Aboriginal development work in the Australian aid agency industry

There is a common perception that Australian aid agencies only recently started working with Aboriginal Australians. This is not the case. Their Aboriginal activities date back to at least the early 1960s when the Save the Children Fund NSW set up and ran kindergartens for Aboriginal children across NSW (Franklin 1995: 34). The Australian Freedom from Hunger Campaign (AFFHC), a forerunner to Oxfam, began funding Aboriginal community development projects in 1972. For example, in Bourke, NSW, AFFHC funded the Aboriginal Advancement Association to employ two Aboriginal field officers for three years. This approach resonates with

Parakrama's (2002) proposed community development activists or change agents discussed in chapter three.

These officers will co-ordinate the selfhelp community development plan and act as resource persons in all group discussions. Their other duties will include the organisation of recreational and sporting activities, immunisation campaigns for children, organisation of adult education courses, and liaising with other support agencies. (ACFOA 1972a: 10)

As well, in Alice Springs, NT, AFFHC funded the Institute for Aboriginal Development which ran classes in child nutrition, Aboriginal language and English.

The grant will be used for much needed equipment, and to help the Institute's efforts in breaking down communication barriers between black and white Australians. (ACFOA 1972a: 10)

The publication of the AFFHC reports in the journal of the ACFOA indicates this was a significant change for aid agencies as an industry.

By the end of the 1970s World Vision and Caritas, the Catholic agency for international development, were also working 'in their own backyard'. In 1979 Mick Miller, the then Chairman of the North Queensland Aboriginal Land Council, delivered CAA's Inaugural National Lecture titled *Australian Aborigines and the Third World: common development issues* (CAA 1979: 1).

The 1980s saw the philosophy of self-management put into practice. The Save the Children Fund NSW handed over the kindergartens established in the 1960s mentioned above to Aboriginal community control (SCF 1983: 1; AECSSU n.d.: online).

In 1992 the Fred Hollows Foundation was founded to continue the work of eye doctor and social justice advocate Fred Hollows. During the 1960s Fred Hollows had started work with Aboriginal Australians and described the state of rural Aboriginal eye health as "like something out of the medical history books ... eye diseases of a kind and degree that hadn't been seen in western society for generations!" (cited in Fred Hollows Foundation n.d.a: online). Fred Hollows later directed a national trachoma program (1976–1978) to address eye disease in rural and remote communities. He later commented:

... the important thing about the trachoma program was Aboriginal liaison. And the reason we succeeded was we got a good lot of Aboriginies [sic] working with

us who would go ahead of us, tell the people what we were on about, what benefits they would gain and get the people on our side. (cited in Fred Hollows Foundation n.d.a: online)

In contrast to the older aid agencies which were established for international work only, the Fred Hollows Foundation was established to undertake both Aboriginal and international work.

During the 2000s the number of aid agencies involved in Aboriginal activities continued to increase. In 2002 UNICEF Australia³⁷ was not involved in Aboriginal development work on the basis that “Australia has the capacity to adequately provide for its own citizens” (UNICEF Australia cited in Schwab and Sutherland 2002: 12). By 2007 this position had been reversed and UNICEF was working with children in remote areas of Central Australia (UNICEF Australia n.d: online).

When research for this thesis began in 2007, ten aid agencies were represented on the ACFID Indigenous Working Group (at the time called ACFOA) (ACFID n.d.: online).³⁸ Later that year the *Close the Gap* campaign for Aboriginal health equality was launched. Campaign supporters included Amnesty International, Australian Red Cross, Caritas, the Fred Hollows Foundation, Oxfam, Save the Children Australia and UNICEF (Close the Gap n.d.: online). Oxfam took a lead role, collaborating with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to produce a policy paper which made specific recommendations to the government (NACCHO and Oxfam Australia 2007). *Close the Gap* represented a turning point for aid agencies. They were now acting together and with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and other advocacy organisations on a campaign to generate the political will for change in government responses to Aboriginal poverty.

Some church affiliated aid agencies acknowledge a longer history with Aboriginal Australians. Church-run Aboriginal missions (reflecting policies of paternalism identified in chapters one and three) continued in Australia until within living memory. As a result there are many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians

³⁷ In this thesis UNICEF Australia is referred to as UNICEF.

³⁸ UNICEF, International Women’s Development Agency and others had joined Save the Children Australia, Oxfam, World Vision, Caritas and the Fred Hollows Foundation.

who have misgivings about the role of church affiliated aid agencies in Aboriginal development (Field notes: 18 Dec. 2007). There are also committed Christian Aboriginal Australians involved with aid agencies and other Christian agencies, as I noted in chapter four. The ‘Make *Indigenous* Poverty History’ campaign, for example, was initiated by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia³⁹. It aims to create political will to include indigenous people, particularly Aboriginal Australians, in government commitments to meet the MDGs (NATSIEC n.d.a: online). It is outside the scope of this research to explore the complex relationship between Aboriginal Australians and Christianity (Butler-McIlwraith 2008). The polarised responses represented above do not represent the only responses, but simply indicate the depth and breadth of feeling that the relationship evokes.

Caritas acknowledges the past harm perpetrated against Aboriginal Australians by the Catholic Church, and the contribution of past harm to the present situation of Aboriginal Australians (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007). From this perspective the principle of Do No Harm (discussed in chapter two) would account for two Caritas policy positions. Caritas does not implement Aboriginal activities on the ground, instead it funds Aboriginal partners to run Aboriginal activities designed with Aboriginal partners (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007). Caritas also does not use government funds for Aboriginal activities. Instead it commits a percentage of its total budget to Aboriginal activities (Field notes: 19 Sept. 2007).

With the notable exception of the Fred Hollows Foundation, the perception that aid agency work with Aboriginal Australians is recent has been fostered by the minimal publicity and low public profile aid agencies have historically given to Aboriginal development work. Some interconnecting factors contributing to the low profile are explored below.

AFFHC’s start in Aboriginal development work in 1972 was controversial. Aid agencies rely on the goodwill of the donating public for income,⁴⁰ and the public was not supportive. Whether Aboriginal poverty in a First World country was seen

³⁹ The ‘Make *Indigenous* Poverty History’ campaign was championed by an Aboriginal minister.

⁴⁰ The proportion of income from the donating public is indicated in Table 5.1.

as an individual's responsibility 'to pull themselves up by the bootstraps' or a government responsibility as described earlier by UNICEF, the prevailing social attitude was that Aboriginal Australians were undeserving. Defending its position, AFFHC argued it was embarrassed that it needed to work in a country with "the wealth and affluence of Australia" (cited in NSW Aborigines Welfare Board 1973: 12). AFFHC's position was that:

in supporting these projects in Australia we are pointing out that the campaign does not have geographical boundaries because we act on priority of needs. (cited in ACFOA 1972a: 10)

AFFHC cited Third World rates of Aboriginal infant mortality in specific areas, including 50% in 1971 (cited in ACFOA 1972b: 10). At the same time the Freedom from Hunger Campaign in the United States was also responding to "poor farmers, Indians, Negroes, alcoholics and drug addicts" (cited in ACFOA 1972a: 10). Initiating Aboriginal activities was clearly supported by an international trend amongst aid agencies.

The social attitude that Aboriginal people are undeserving was slow to shift, and remains contentious today. Anecdotes from the 1980s are explicit. In 1988, the bicentenary of Australia's colonisation, one church organisation announced that part of a fundraising appeal would support Aboriginal development work. In reply some donation envelopes were returned marked 'not be used for' Aboriginal purposes (Field notes: 25 June 2008). Oxfam Community Aid Abroad's research during the 1990s indicated donors were still not prepared to support Aboriginal activities (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007). Aid agencies generally managed this through minimal publicity for Aboriginal development work (Storey 2006: 44–45; pers. comm. 6 May 2008).

Australian government arrangements for the tax deductibility of donations to aid agencies made matters more complex. Public donations to aid agencies for international work made to an *Overseas Aid Fund* are tax deductible. They cannot be used for Aboriginal activities within Australia. To overcome this aid agencies needed to meet an additional taxation requirement and establish a *Necessitous Persons Fund* or *Public Benevolent Institution* status for tax deductibility of donations for Australian activities. This was not insurmountable, but it also required developing a donor base for Aboriginal development work. The

alternative was financing Aboriginal activities with income over which the aid agencies had discretion (i.e. self-generated income) (Field notes: 4 June 2008).

Although these difficulties did not prevent aid agencies from doing Aboriginal development work, it did challenge them to consider a role in educating donors rather than being led by them. In the mid 2000s Oxfam began to increase the publicity and profile of its Aboriginal activities, and it lost some donors as expected. However social attitudes in Australia were changing and new donors were also attracted in support of Aboriginal activities (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007).

Within the aid agencies supporters of the Aboriginal self-determination movement also were ambivalent about their role. Do aid agencies perpetuate the same power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians – between the colonised and the colonisers – that is the problem to start with? How can aid agencies engage with Aboriginal self-determination when they are not Aboriginal? As ATSIC emerged in the 1990 as a vehicle for self-determination, the ambivalence of the aid agencies increased:

[I]t appears that since the advent of ATSIC, and through a concern not to adopt a paternalistic or 'missionary' role, such agencies [as Oxfam, World Vision and Caritas] have withdrawn from ... work with Indigenous communities in Australia. (Fred Hollows Foundation 2002: 22)

Storey's conversations about a new direction for Oxfam in 2002 describe this as 'angst':

There was a strong desire to support autonomous Indigenous organisations to do their own thing. There was a lot of angst about having a specific Oxfam voice or position because they wanted to stand back from speaking for people; they didn't want to impose an Oxfam ideology or agenda on Indigenous communities. A lot of angst. (Oxfam interview cited in Storey 2006: 34)

This concern not to impose an external agenda continues today as a theme common to the aid agencies considered here. It is the same theme expressed in Aboriginal research concerning Aboriginal control of the Aboriginal research agenda discussed in chapter four. The agencies considered here manage this by working at the *invitation* of, in a *partnership* with, Aboriginal communities. The complexities of this are explored further in chapter seven.

Aid agencies, government and Aboriginal Australians: Tensions in relations

When in 1972 AFFHC argued that “the needs of our Aboriginal citizens have been terribly neglected” (cited in ACFOA 1972a: 10), it was implicitly criticising government. Prioritising Aboriginal needs alongside those in Third World countries exposed Australian government failure to provide equally for its citizens. The mere act of Aboriginal activities presented a sensitive situation for aid agencies already in a donor relationship with the government – AusAID is the single largest donor to Australian NGO aid agencies. To be critical of government when funded by government is to ‘bite the hand that feeds’. It was a significant incentive for aid agencies to minimise the publicity and public profile of Aboriginal development work.

This situation only became less sensitive when the Australian government, through ATSIC, began to explore international development as a source of policy alternatives. In 1998 Colin Dillon included Oxfam Community Aid Abroad on a working group to advise on development approaches to inform his review into Palm Island and Doomadgee Aboriginal communities: the Dillon Report (2000), discussed in chapter three. The Oxfam Community Aid Abroad relationship with ATSIC ⁴¹ then led to the Parakrama Report (2002) which specifically applied an international perspective to Aboriginal development issues, also discussed in chapter three. Aid agencies were no longer in the role of government critic. They were now a resource for government policy development. I have set out the parallel paths of the aid agencies’ Aboriginal development work and government interest in international development approaches to Aboriginal policy since the 1960s in a timeline in Appendix B.

Aid agencies have a long tradition of funding local community-based organisations to run Aboriginal activities, beginning with the original work of AFFHC in Bourke and Alice Springs described earlier in this chapter. Caritas and Oxfam offer examples of activities funded by aid agencies then picked up by government for ongoing funding. Caritas’ initial development and funding of a financial management program in western NSW is now government funded (Field notes: 19 Sept. 2007). Oxfam’s initial development and funding of a health policy position in

⁴¹ Centre for Appropriate Technology Alice Springs was also part of this relationship.

WAACCHO (Western Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation)⁴² is now government funded in every state (Field notes: 18 Dec. 2007).

Since the 1990s the broader policy environment in which Australian NGOs operate has seen two significant trends with different impacts on Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and aid agencies. The first is an increasing regulatory environment. The second is a government policy shift to a competitive market for social services. What has been a threat to small organisations, typified by local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, has been an opportunity for large organisations, typified by aid agencies.

Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have struggled to meet increasing external demands of regulation and administration. The introduction of a national Goods and Services Tax, changes to Occupational Health & Safety legislation, and the expansion of quality standards demonstrated through documentation, have required levels of administration which were previously unknown in Australian workplaces. Each government funding source brings further 'red tape' for application processes and for reporting requirements.

While the capacity of Aboriginal communities to run organisations has increased over time, the burden of externally imposed administration and compliance has increased *faster*. Over time Aboriginal capacity has *decreased* in relation to the demands on it. The result is an increased capacity gap between Aboriginal capacity and external demands (Moran 2006: 3). Singer/songwriter Kev Carmody's *Pillars of Society* (1989) illustrates this common frustration in Aboriginal experience through metaphor:

There is a hierarchy of dominance
With power at the top
If you think you've found the magic key
You find they've changed the locks.

Complaints by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations led to a government commissioned evaluation into 'red tape' in Aboriginal communities. Its conclusion "that *actual* red tape is less than *perceived* red tape" (Morgan Disney & Associates

⁴² WAACCHO has been replaced by the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia.

2006: 80) was disappointing. It privileged Western worldviews over Aboriginal worldviews, and by doing so problematised the latter. In this way it reinforced the view of Aboriginal as 'deviant', identified by Anderson, Baum and Bentley (2007) which I discussed in chapter four.

In addition to Aboriginal capacity decreasing in an increasingly regulated environment, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are now competing with corporate scale NGOs for funding or contracts. The government policy shift since the 1990s to a competitive market for social services is an aspect of successive governments' neo-liberal commitment to "minimising the role of the state and maximising that of the market" (Walter 2007: 158) as a condition of global economic participation, discussed in chapter three. Kamat (2003) discusses the impacts of neo-liberalism on NGOs generally and Moran (2008) on Aboriginal affairs specifically.

The free market approach to delivering social services means services previously delivered by government (e.g. prisons or the Commonwealth Employment Service) or funded to local community-based organisations (e.g. child care centres) were opened up to 'a level playing field of competition'. As a result corporate scale NGOs including aid agencies and well-established Christian charitable NGOs (e.g. Wesley Mission and the Salvation Army) "are increasingly entering Indigenous affairs in Australia, largely by tendering for government contracts for service delivery, predominantly in the health and family services sectors" (Moran 2008: 4).

Contracts are awarded through a tendering process, which characteristically undervalue local knowledge and trusted relationships, and overvalue documented procedures which depend on corporate scale infrastructure. Tendering for contracts potentially puts aid agencies in *competition* with local Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. This is the antithesis of the Save the Children Fund NSW development process which incubated Aboriginal community-controlled pre-schools between the 1960s and the 1980s.

Contracting to government increases the income and therefore fortifies the financial sustainability of an aid agency, however, it may also represent a threat to agency autonomy. Government contracting raises questions about who controls

the program. “Is the program designed and driven by the NGO or is the NGO implementing a tendered-out program designed largely by government?” (Hunt and Schwab 2007: 31). Under tendering, the contractor’s activities and outcomes are predetermined in the contract. The program is independent of, and potentially competes with, the development approach of the agency. When an aid agency is in a contractual relationship with government, the work does not carry an implied criticism of government. The government is responsible for the work. The aid agency is a contractor to, an agent of, government.

Contracting changes the accountability to the community which receives the service. The government is the purchaser, specifying the quantity, quality, inputs and outputs of the service. The aid agency is contracted to deliver the specified service for a time-limited period. The Aboriginal community is the recipient of the specified service. The aid agency is contractually accountable to the government, despite *quasi-accountabilities* to the community which may be specified in the contract (Craig and Porter cited in Moran 2008: 2). This replaces direct accountability to the community when the agency funds the activity. The government accountability to the community can also be “inadvertently undermine[d] and depoliticise[d]” (Moran 2008: 3) through the contracting.

In practice, activities funded by aid agencies and contracted by government are not mutually exclusive. They can and do occur within the same aid agency for different activities within a program, at the same time. As I noted earlier, Caritas does not seek government funding for Aboriginal activities. The Fred Hollows Foundation, Oxfam and World Vision do use government funds as well as public or corporate donations to finance Aboriginal development work. It represents a way of engaging with appropriate stakeholders, or partners in the development process.

Table 5.1: Aid agencies' Aboriginal activities in an organisational context

		World Vision	Oxfam	Fred Hollows Foundation
Background	Year founded in Australia	1966	1953 (Food for Peace)	1992
	Secular/Christian	Christian	Secular	Secular
	International affiliation	World Vision International	Oxfam International	Fred Hollows Found. Int.
	Year Aboriginal activities started	1979	1972	1992
2007 snapshot	Number of countries where it works	62 (World Vision Aust. 2007a: 6)	31 (Oxfam Aust. 2007a: 7)	18 (Fred Hollows Found. 2008a: 12)
	Annual revenue – \$	\$356.5 million (World Vision Aust. 2007a: 42)	\$54.5 million (Oxfam Aust. 2007a: 53)	\$18.7 million (Fred Hollows Found. 2008a: 24)
	% of revenue from AusAID	4% (World Vision Aust. 2007a: 42)	9% (Oxfam Aust. 2007a: 53)	6% (Fred Hollows Found. 2008a: 24)
	% of revenue from public & corporate donations	93% (World Vision Aust. 2007a: 44)	69% (Oxfam Aust. 2007a: 53)	79% (Fred Hollows Found. 2008a: 24)
	\$ Expenditure on Aboriginal activities ⁴³	\$882,393 (World Vision Aust. 2007a: 44)	\$2.3 million (Oxfam Aust. 2007a: 53)	2.3 million (Fred Hollows Found. 2008a: 24)
	Aboriginal activities as % of all program expenditure	0.3% (World Vision Aust. 2007a: 43)	6% (Oxfam Aust. 2007a: 53)	22% (Fred Hollows Found. 2008a: 24)

Source: Agency websites and 2007 annual reports

⁴³ The combined aid agency Aboriginal expenditure in 2007 was \$5.5 million. This compares with the annual \$3.5 billion (\$3,500 million) the Australian government spends on the Aboriginal portfolio (cited in Behrendt 2007: 1).

Australian aid agencies: Overviews

In the earlier section of this chapter I set the broad context for aid agencies' Aboriginal development work. In the following section I narrow the discussion to how three agencies transfer international development to an Aboriginal context. The three agencies are World Vision, Oxfam, and the Fred Hollows Foundation. They were selected for the high levels of recognition with the Australian public and their diverse affiliations and histories. This was discussed in chapter four.

I use each agency's public documents to identify their approach to development, the place of Aboriginal development work within the agency, and any changes in the approach to Aboriginal development work. Although there is diversity within the three agencies, I am more interested in their commonalities. This reflects the purpose of the research, which is to consider the transfer of international development to Aboriginal activities, not to evaluate the work of the aid agencies. I do not discuss specific activities, but have described examples in Appendix D. The descriptions rely on public documents largely aimed at providing accountability to and continuing support from donors. I have made no attempt to evaluate them. Again this was not the purpose of the research. The examples are not a full account of the work of each agency. They indicate the range of ways aid agencies are undertaking Aboriginal development work in Australia.

World Vision Australia

In its own words:

World Vision is Australia's largest overseas aid and humanitarian organisation. As well as providing relief in emergency situations, we work on long-term development projects with local communities to address the causes of poverty and help them become self-sufficient. Our mission is to engage Australians in the effort to eliminate poverty and its causes. (World Vision Australia n.d.a: 1)

World Vision was formed in 1966 to provide relief and welfare to children orphaned by wars and disasters. It began as an Australian counterpart to World Vision in the USA which was founded by the missionary Bob Pierce. World Vision shifted its approach from assisting individual children and adopted a community development approach in the 1970s in order to sustain change. In the 1980s it adopted a collaborative relationship with communities rather than a welfarist approach (World Vision Australia 2004: 1). World Vision is a Christian organisation, engaging "by example" and opposing "proselytism, conversion and

coercion of any kind” (World Vision Australia n.d.b: 1). World Vision does not specify an affiliation to any denomination or church on its website or in its annual reports. It is therefore not clear whether its organisational history has associations with church-run Aboriginal missions discussed earlier in this chapter.

World Vision (2004: 1) sees ‘development’:

not just as a higher material standard of living, but as a process of poor people taking control of their situations, identifying their most critical needs, and working together to find solutions. In this way we can transform their lives.

World Vision’s approach to development is underpinned by a Christian commitment to social justice which has much in common with human rights.

World Vision (n.d.b: 1) describes its approach to development as

transformational: “a holistic approach to improving the lives of the poor by recognising people’s physical, social, spiritual, economic and political needs”.

Transformational development begins with transforming the lives of individual children and ends with transforming systems and structures (WVDRT 2002: 10).

Oxfam Australia

In its own words:

Oxfam Australia is an Australian, independent, not-for-profit, secular community-based aid and development organisation. Our work includes long-term development projects, responding to emergencies and campaigning for a more just world. (Oxfam Australia n.d. a: online)

Oxfam’s origins lie in mergers between a number of smaller agencies. Its oldest forerunner, Food For Peace, was a church affiliated group started in Melbourne in 1953 to provide relief to people in India. Food For Peace was renamed Community Aid Abroad in 1962 and the focus shifted from relief to community development in order to change the causes of poverty. The Australian Freedom From Hunger Campaign started in 1961 and merged with renamed Community Aid Abroad in 1992. The name changed to Oxfam Australia in 2005 (Oxfam Australia n.d.b: online).

Oxfam uses a human rights based approach to development. “We believe the following five human rights are central for true and sustainable development”: the right to a livelihood, to basic services, to security, to a voice, and to an identity (Oxfam Australia 2007a: 1).

Oxfam employs community development as a strategy for lasting change.

Experience in community development both in Australia and in developing countries has highlighted the effectiveness and sustainability of programs that address the real needs of communities and ensure the commitment of communities to the programs. This occurs when communities have a significant role in the design, implementation and governance of the programs. (Oxfam Australia n.d.c: online)

The Fred Hollows Foundation

In its own words:

The Fred Hollows Foundation is an independent, non-profit and secular development agency that works both internationally and in Australia. (Fred Hollows Foundation 2008b: 3)

The Fred Hollows Foundation was founded in 1992, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, to continue the work of eye doctor and social justice advocate Fred Hollows. It is a health focused agency; internationally concerned with eye health and in Australia with Aboriginal health and wellbeing. The Fred Hollows Foundation's international work can be seen as humanitarian relief (eye surgery) combined with development (training health and medical staff) and advocacy.

The Fred Hollows Foundation (2002: 1) describes development as follows:

Our simple, working definition of 'development' is that it is a process which transforms an individual, community or country from a position of dependence to a position of self-reliance which is sustainable.

Discussion

All three agencies have a common emphasis on a human rights approach to development and a community development approach to change. The human rights based approach, which I described in chapter two, is expressed in different ways. World Vision articulates it as Christian social justice. Oxfam articulates rights to a livelihood, to basic services, to security, to a voice, and to an identity. The Fred Hollows Foundation articulates the right to health. All three agencies see 'development' in terms of the community development literature described in chapter two. They describe a participatory, partnership, bottom-up approach.

In chapter two I described Korten's (1990) first three generations or phases of NGOs (relief and welfare, community development, sustainable systems development). These phases are seen in the histories of World Vision and Oxfam.

Both agencies were conceived to provide humanitarian relief to address symptoms of poverty, and continue to do so. Over time both agencies implemented community development so communities could address the causes of poverty within communities, and then advocacy to change external policies and systems which maintain poverty. Korten's (1990) description implies that NGOs progress from one phase to the next over time. This is not the situation for World Vision and Oxfam. Each new phase has added to earlier phases, not replaced them.

The Fred Hollows Foundation operates simultaneously in all three phases, however, unlike World Vision and Oxfam it seems to have always done so. This may reflect the more recent times in which it was founded. The Fred Hollows Foundation also differs in that it was founded to work in Australia and internationally, as noted earlier in this chapter, while World Vision and Oxfam were formed for international work exclusively.

Australian aid agencies' Aboriginal development work

World Vision Australia

World Vision's work began with Aboriginal communities in 1979 in response to an invitation by Aboriginal church leaders to help with leadership in their communities (World Vision Australia 2005a: 1). This is consistent with both its Christian affiliation and the principle of not imposing an external agenda on Aboriginal communities.

World Vision (2007b: 1) summarises its Aboriginal activities as:

World Vision works in partnerships with indigenous people in the Northern Territory community of Wetenngerr, and Armadale, in Perth, Western Australia. These programs aim to promote healthy lifestyles, build the communities' capacity to sustain themselves in the long term, assist in providing support for the aged and increase opportunities for indigenous youth.

Examples of specific activities include working to re-establish a self-representation committee, operating an Aboriginal art gallery, and a youth circus. These are described in Appendix D.

Oxfam Australia

Oxfam identifies its Aboriginal development work as beginning with AFFHC's controversial work in Bourke and Alice Springs in 1972, described earlier in this chapter. Recent accounts suggest that until the 2000s the Aboriginal development work was tentative and unsystematic; tentative due to concern not to impose an external agenda on Aboriginal Australians; and unsystematic in its attempt "to do and solve everything" (Storey 2006: 33).

In 2002 Oxfam resolved to expand its Aboriginal development work (Oxfam Australia 2007b: 11) and to make it more consistent with its international work (Oxfam Australia 2004a: 1). This meant focusing on activities concerning health, youth and self-determination, and integrating the cross-cutting themes of gender, HIV/AIDS and human rights into all activities (Oxfam Australia 2004a: 1). A review two years later identified some successes, for example, "progress in promoting adoption of Oxfam Australia's principles and methodology for youth at risk to relevant government agencies in Queensland and New South Wales" (Oxfam Australia 2004a: 2). It also identified that Aboriginal development work was not yet consistent with international work. Attention was needed (Oxfam Australia 2004a: 3):

- to include a more thorough environmental scan in project design [context analysis in chapter two]
- to invest in more documentation of achievements and lessons
- to improve management frameworks
- to develop a basic logic model, consistent with Oxfam's monitoring and evaluation framework [program logic or logframe – see chapter two].

In 2004 Oxfam established an *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group*⁴⁴ as a mechanism for broad accountability to and input from Aboriginal Australians (Oxfam Australia 2007c: 8, Oxfam Australia n.d.d: online):

The Reference Group plays a key role in maintaining Oxfam's accountability and knowledge of the wider political environment and national strategies in Indigenous affairs. (Oxfam Australia n.d.d: online)

In 2007 Oxfam ran 25 Aboriginal projects with 16 partner organisations. In line with Oxfam's rights based approach 15 projects involved the right to basic services,

⁴⁴ In November 2007 the 16 member group included Professor Larissa Behrendt, Professor Judy Atkinson, Jill Gallagher and Olga Havnen, all cited in this thesis.

15 projects involved the right to be heard, and 3 projects involved the right to identity (Oxfam Australia 2007a: 15, 23, 25).

Examples of specific activities include funding an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation to run community development workshops, supporting families to communicate that alcohol and other drugs are not welcome in their homes, and supporting young emerging leaders in Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations. These are described in Appendix D.

The Fred Hollows Foundation

The early Aboriginal development work of the Fred Hollows Foundation involved health activities in far north Queensland as well as advocacy for improved national eye health services (Fred Hollows Foundation 1995: 7; 1998: 14; 1999: 12). In 1999 Aboriginal activities were expanded to include general health and education (Fred Hollows Foundation n.d.b: 1). These activities focused on nutrition and community development, and recognised “that engaging indigenous communities in the process of developing their own solutions is as important as the initiatives themselves” (Fred Hollows Foundation 2001: 6).

The Fred Hollows Foundation (2008a: 1) now identifies different visions for its international and Aboriginal development work:

The vision of the Fred Hollows Foundation is for a world where no one is needlessly blind, and Indigenous Australians enjoy the same health and life expectancy as other Australians.

This signals a greater scope for Aboriginal development work (health and life expectancy) than international work (eye health). This scope is again increased by adopting the holistic approach of the Social Determinants of Health in Aboriginal development work (Fred Hollows Foundation 2008b: 3). As I discussed in chapter two, the Social Determinants of Health are the economic, physical and social conditions which determine health.

The Fred Hollows Foundation (2008c: 4) identifies the key principles in its Aboriginal activities as:

- partnerships
- listening
- providing assistance

- engaging all Australians.

The Fred Hollows Foundation has an Indigenous Program Advisory Committee (Fred Hollows Foundation 2008a: 22).

Current Aboriginal activities are summarised:

The Foundation currently supports a wide range of programs and projects in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and western New South Wales that cover areas such as nutrition, women's health and development, aural health, literacy, advocacy, training, community engagement and eye health. (Fred Hollows Foundation 2008b: 3)

Examples of specific activities include facilitating eye surgery for people in remote communities, working with communities to improve nutrition through the supply of fresh food, and improving young people's literacy through a traditional song project and an after school music program. These are described in Appendix D.

Discussion

This review of documents shows some differences between approaches to international and Aboriginal development work. The most significant is that the Fred Hollows Foundation has a greater scope for Aboriginal than international work. Documents indicate that World Vision and Oxfam are sensitive to the risk of imposing an external agenda on Aboriginal Australians. This is consistent with the principle of Aboriginal control of the Aboriginal research agenda for the research to benefit Aboriginal people (Foley 2003; Rigney 2001; Smith 1999, 2005) which I discussed in chapter four. The Oxfam and the Fred Hollows Foundation advisory groups provide a formal mechanism of Aboriginal input and accountability. Of course there are many other potential forms of Aboriginal input and accountability (Aboriginal board members, managers, workers, and 'partners' to name a few), however, it is not within the scope of this research to examine these.

So what do these agencies actually do on the ground with Aboriginal Australians? At first glance the answer would appear to be never the same thing twice. A circus program for young people, an Aboriginal art gallery, a national health advocacy campaign, a collaboration to provide eye surgery in Central Australia, and a traditional song project are all described in Appendix D. They would appear to have little in common. This reflects the ad hoc ways in which relationships

between aid agencies and Aboriginal Australians developed, the varied context of each different relationship, and the issue which the relationship was initiated to address.

What, then do these disparate Aboriginal activities have in common with one another, and with international work? This becomes clear when they are considered in terms of underlying principles. Agency documents reveal that these include:

- long-term engagement
- work in partnerships with communities
- work in response to an invitation by communities
- community development
- capacity building
- advocacy.

These principles are discussed with other themes from participant interviews in chapters six and seven.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how the Aboriginal development work of Australian aid agencies sits within a broad organisational context, and the organisational context is situated within a changing Australian social, political and economic context. These contexts present tensions to be managed within each agency.

The agencies also manage competing accountabilities; to the donating public, to funders (government) and to Aboriginal beneficiaries. In Third World work, these would be happening on different continents. In Aboriginal development work, the agency is not outside the context of the work. It is part of the context, as I will discuss in chapter six.

The three agencies considered in this study share human rights, community development, and advocacy approaches to development, which means lasting change. It is not the Aboriginal activities themselves which have commonalities, but the processes of implementation which will be discussed in chapter seven. Before that however it is important to note the limitations to the transfer of

international development approaches to Australian contexts. This is the subject of chapter six.

Chapter six: Transferring international approaches to Australian contexts

Introduction

In this chapter and the next I present the research findings. These are based on six interviews with development practitioners from World Vision, Oxfam and the Fred Hollows Foundation, and an ‘inside-outsider’ – an outsider not employed by World Vision, Oxfam and Fred Hollows Foundation, but on the inside as a member of ACFID. Because there were relatively few participants in the study, I use aid agency documents to support and substantiate the participants’ reflections. The research participants had a variety of backgrounds and current positions. None were Aboriginal. Some talked about working internationally – in countries such as Iraq, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Timor Leste and South Africa. Three were women, three were men. Three held executive-level positions in their agencies, two directly managed Aboriginal programs, and one directly managed international programs and had previously worked in Aboriginal development. Five worked for aid agencies, one for an advocacy NGO. Four worked for secular organisations, two worked for Christian organisations. All were based in Melbourne or Sydney.

This chapter begins by setting out how participants see the history to the current crossover of international and Aboriginal development practice, and their understanding of the crossover as a two-way process. I then identify some limitations to the transfer of international practice to an Australian context, and note some which do not have an apparent explanation. Finally I consider the impact of differences in urban, rural and remote contexts within Australia on Aboriginal development work.

The crossover between international and Aboriginal development

Some participants mentioned work in Aboriginal development prior to their involvement in aid agencies. Those who had first worked in Aboriginal development in the 1970s and 1980s saw the introduction of international

development approaches as a paradigm shift, offering a framework that had been missing.

One participant saw Aboriginal development in the 1970s as a time of “pre-development thinking, pre-development frameworks being put in place” (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation). Shared principles had existed – Aboriginal control, overcoming dispossession of land (land rights), confronting racial segregation, and empowerment – but there was not a framework which brought them together. Another participant experienced crisis management rather than change, because there were no systems to protect rights:

The community was on our side, but it didn’t mean you did anything really useful a lot of the time. Or we had a narrow focus, like dealing with influx of mining industry people. You would see someone starting to dig here, and then you go and find out who they were. That grassroots action-based stuff. Because there were no systems in place to protect land owners from that sort of stuff. (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation)

Component parts were treated as separate (housing, health, education, legal issues, employment) and not interrelated. “There was nobody talking about housing as health hardware.⁴⁵ People were talking about housing as shelter” (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation).

Both these participants described a transformative experience when they encountered international development approaches. One participant was introduced to international development tools by colleagues who had worked in PNG. For example the logframe, described in chapter two, provided an alternative to relying on intuition. “Suddenly, for me anyway, it was like a light went on” (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation).⁴⁶

Another participant recalls experiences in Vietnam:

In Vietnam I encountered serious development thinking. The Government had put a lot of thought into the future of its own nation ... I was working with people who were intensely interested in their own local, regional and national development. I had this wonderful experience of seeing things change. They overcame the food insecurity. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

These experiences prompted frustration about Australia:

⁴⁵ See Fred Hollows Foundation (2004) *Housing and Health Hardware*.

⁴⁶ The logframe will be discussed again later in this chapter.

Why aren't there small enterprise assistance schemes⁴⁷ available to people around Uluru to establish tourism ventures? Because all this stuff is standard, its part of your tool box in international development. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

The long-term perspective of the most experienced participant confirms the exploratory approach for the research. In terms of crossovers between international development and Aboriginal development, while identifying some frameworks, the participant reflected: “I think it is still early days in terms of development in Australia” (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation).

Most participants clearly saw the crossover between international and Aboriginal development work as two-way. International development lessons can make a valuable contribution to Aboriginal poverty reduction – the topic of this research. Equally Aboriginal development has lessons for international development. It is beyond the scope of this research to consider these; however, it is clearly an area for further exploration. One participant described the reciprocal potential:

[There is potential to] draw on our strengths as an international organisation for two way learning. For bringing ideas and experiences and exchanges and visits of people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to other development settings internationally where we have strong programs, and the reverse. I think there are enormous learnings. (Participant A – Oxfam)

Participants stressed that international approaches are not directly replicated in Australia, but are considered for adaptation:

We drew on a lot of theory and data from the international field and we would internally analyse different approaches that we were using overseas, even currently, to see whether they were going to be appropriate or could be adapted for programs in Australia. (Participants C and D⁴⁸ – World Vision)

However participants were also clear that international development has lots to offer:

[W]e had confidence in our overseas work. Also, the methods of engagement overseas were rigorous and considered ...

At World Vision there is a constant thought process around lessons learned and critical thinking around the best impact on the ground. A lot of that was in our international field and was informed by the international organisation [World

⁴⁷ The transferability of micro-enterprise to Aboriginal contexts was discussed in chapter three (McDonnell 1999; Opportunity International 2004).

⁴⁸ Participants C and D were interviewed together (as discussed in chapter four). Their responses are therefore presented together.

Vision International] and we were fortunate enough to draw on that as practitioners working in Australia. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

Similarly, another participant explained:

Development, as practiced professionally works. It needs a considerable tool box of approaches. We need to know how household livelihood frameworks work⁴⁹. How human rights frameworks work⁵⁰. All sorts of different ways you can approach things. At the end of the day – you can get outcomes, in this situation the same as any other. As long as you have the right input, the right processes, and they are largely determined by the local context⁵¹. I reckon that's a major thing I've learned. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

Differences in international and Australian contexts: Limitations to transference

Same same, but different

In exploring lessons from international development for Australia it is essential to identify the limits of transference. As I noted in chapter four, comparative methodology is useful to “provide some perspective on one’s own context from the knowledge of what occurs elsewhere and so avoid ethnocentrism” (Havemann 1999: 2). However it requires establishing “the scope and limits of generalisation from one context to another” (p. 2). Uncritical transference of lessons increases the chance for failure. At best, a failed activity is a waste of time and money. At worst, it causes harm – yet another failure in Aboriginal affairs.

Of course each international context is different from the next, as emerged as a theme in the literature discussed in chapter two. However participants identify a number of consistent differences in Australia. The differences relate to the Fourth World position of Aboriginal people, Australia’s First World environment, and the developer’s position as coloniser. These differences provide the beginnings of a framework for the assessment of policy and practice transference. They are explained below.

⁴⁹ Household livelihoods frameworks use households as the unit of analysis in the sustainable livelihoods approach or framework. The sustainable livelihoods approach was discussed in chapter two.

⁵⁰ The human rights framework was discussed in chapters two and three.

⁵¹ The importance of local context was discussed in chapter two.

Different worldviews and Aboriginal marginalisation (Fourth World)

Participants identify differences working in Australia because of the Fourth World position of Aboriginal people. As discussed in chapters one and two Fourth World peoples experience exclusion which limits capability.

The Aboriginal way is not the dominant culture: Participants contrast the marginalisation of Aboriginal communities with the general situation of the people in developing countries. Participants identify that Aboriginal worldviews and mainstream Australian worldviews are different. One participant reflects that working with Aboriginal communities means working with people who do not share the worldviews of the systems around them, in contrast to Vietnam:

[The] Vietnamese were the dominant culture in the country; that was the mainstream way. All the structures within that country operated within the dominant culture. Whereas working with the Aboriginal culture here, the dominant structures around them don't operate within their cultural thinking. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

Chapter five indicates that the work of World Vision, Oxfam and the Fred Hollows Foundation is founded on the principle of partnership with beneficiaries. One participant identifies that in contrast to developing countries, Aboriginal marginalisation inhibits the potential for genuine partnerships. Mainstream cultural domination and Aboriginal marginalisation also induce a responsibility to engage with government to bring about change.

If you went into an Aboriginal community, there is an expectation that engagement is an equal partnership, but at the same time we know that their own [Aboriginal] structures are subsumed by a broader superstructure that actually contains them. So if you want to change things you need the government system that's impacting on them to be involved. (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation)

Although expressions of Aboriginal worldviews vary across Australia, they are consistently different from mainstream worldviews. The resulting marginalisation of Aboriginal people is not confined to remote communities. The following comment describes an urban area:

The mainstream health service try to design a health service that is open for all but have never gone to every household and asked these young Aboriginal women why they don't come? Or ventured further into their issues. That is the type of thing we did. Even just helping young women understand how that health service can possibly help them ... So, it was, again just being sensitive to a different culture's needs. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

The comment reveals that the mainstream urban health service assumes Aboriginal people have or should take on mainstream worldviews. An integral part of development work is to challenge this assumption. This work, both education and advocacy, happens at a local level with projects, but also at the national level, conferring legitimacy on Aboriginal worldviews.

The importance of Aboriginal worldviews, a theme of earlier chapters, is also identified by World Vision CEO Tim Costello. The *Australian* newspaper reports that he argues that when development means “abandoning culture and assimilating into Western world view and way of life” Aboriginal Australians will always resist progress and development (cited in Robinson 2008: online).

At the same time as challenging assumptions about the universality of mainstream worldviews, strengthening Aboriginal worldviews and identity is an important part of development work. For example World Vision’s development activities in urban Armadale in outer Perth, WA, are underpinned by “strong cultural foundations so that youth and their families are equipped with a clear understanding of their social heritage” (2006b: 1). I will return to this in discussions on identity in chapters seven and eight.

In summary, the dominance of mainstream worldviews marginalises Aboriginal Australians creating a Fourth World. This impacts on Aboriginal development work in a number of ways. It impacts on the lack of cultural congruence between Aboriginal Australians and the institutions in their surrounding environments, and on the power Aboriginal Australians bring to partnerships. Aid agencies indicate it brings responsibility to educate mainstream Australians or advocate for recognition of Aboriginal worldviews as both different and legitimate, and to affirm and strengthen Aboriginal worldviews within Aboriginal communities⁵².

Aid agencies have a demonstration role: In chapter three I noted Makuwira’s (2007: 134) view that in a segregated society policy makers are powerless to bring about change. My perspective is that in Australia this powerlessness extends far

⁵² I understand that this raises questions of cultural appropriation, however it can also create trust as shown in chapter seven by the community member’s comment: “Because Oxfam thinks about integrating our culture and Elders into their programs it makes it safer for people and they want to be involved” (Oxfam Australia 2008c: 1).

beyond policy makers. The angst producing questions for aid agencies described in chapter five are common, and many human service managers with mainstream responsibilities which include Aboriginal access react to the fear of doing it wrong (an intuitive understanding of Do No Harm) with paralysis. When in doubt, they do nothing.

Aid agencies which build working relationships with Aboriginal communities model an alternative. They demonstrate a way through the paralysis. This demonstration role was also found in research by Storey (2006: 37):

... (World Vision) states, aiming 'to get positive examples, or just examples of practice into the domestic sector ... so then offer the sector options of practice', is not only an important aspect or outcome of their work; it is 'our main agenda and our main commitment'.

Oxfam sees that its Gulf Regional Health Service plays a demonstration role for local mainstream services. A preliminary evaluation suggests that its engagement with local communities provides modelling which has influenced the practices of other organisations (Oxfam Australia and Searle 2007). The Fred Hollows Foundation also recognises that the *Central Australian Integrated Eye Health Program*, by bringing Aboriginal and mainstream expertise and resources together, provides a model for engagement and collaboration.

Impact of a developed state (First World)

Aid agencies identify that Australia's economic and political position as a First World country provides a different context for development work. World Vision CEO, Tim Costello, describes in the *Sydney Morning Herald* the Australian government's responsibility and capacity in relation to Aboriginal poverty (Costello quoted in "Aboriginal health needs 'new ways'" 2008):

The government clearly has a leading role to play in eradicating poverty and disadvantage. Unlike in many developing nations, in Australia government has both the responsibility to respond and the capacity to do so.

I discuss the implications of this for development work below.

Aboriginal Australians have rights on paper, but are largely unable to exercise them: Since 1967 Aboriginal people have been legally entitled to the same civil rights as other Australians however social exclusion, discussed in chapter two, makes exercising these rights difficult. Participants refer to this in different ways.

One describes remote community housing where sub-standard construction is not redressed:

You have a right not to have sewerage coming up through your bathroom floor, through appropriate building standards. We have laws about that in Australia. People who construct houses that break those laws, they need to be prosecuted. The community should not even worry about that. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

Another participant notes that legal recognition of rights, and the ability to exercise rights are reversed in the situation of Aboriginal Australian and indigenous people in developing countries. The rights of indigenous people in Third World countries are “almost the flip side of indigenous Australia where now there are a suite of rights – at least on paper” (Participant B – Oxfam). The participant explains that indigenous people in Third World countries organise representation structures around livelihoods, for example to sell produce at local markets. Representation allows them to exercise rights which are not legally recognised. In developing countries aid agencies can use this as a site of community development to create or strengthen representative organisations which then advocate for institutional change. This is similar to the *Animation* process described in chapter two (Rahman 1993).

The entry points for Oxfam in developing countries are often around livelihoods, for example subsistence farmers for cattle, micro-credit, rice yields. From that, policy issues emerge, and that leads to civil society and NGOs. (Participant B – Oxfam)

In contrast to Third World countries, in Australia there are already a multiplicity of Aboriginal representative organisations. Some are Aboriginal community-controlled NGOs such as Aboriginal Medical Services and former Community Development Employment Projects. Others are statutory, such as the former ATSIC and Aboriginal Land Councils. Almost all operate under specific government conditions and are supported and constrained by government resources. The existence of these organisations has had a significant impact on the way Oxfam for example approaches Aboriginal development. In contrast to Third World contexts: “Oxfam generally won’t start representative bodies in Australia” (Participant B – Oxfam).

Aid agencies do not work on physical infrastructure or deliver essential services in Australia: In developing countries, aid agencies are involved in building and running schools, in delivering health care, and in the construction of water and

sanitation infrastructure. In Australia, as a First World country, the government has the responsibility to provide these services and facilities to its citizens. Aid agencies working with Aboriginal communities are careful not to relieve the government of this responsibility, despite the obvious need. About this they are emphatic:

We don't build wells in Australia, and we don't run schools, or raise money for exercise books in the way that we might in other parts of the world. Our central premise is that we are a First World country here. What is acceptable as the expectations for my children should be the same expectations for others as a basic right of citizenship ... It's not that Australia doesn't have the money or the resources or the capacity. (Participant A – Oxfam)

Some things you *don't* do because Australia is a post-industrialist country and we are meant to have a government that does it. There is always a consciousness of how much you do on behalf of the government and that the government really should be doing it ... For example, with housing we would not do infrastructure in Australia because we have a government that has this mandate. That was a really big one. Even though the need is great we were not in a position to do that, where perhaps we would do that overseas. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

The demarcation is difficult when witnessing devastating consequences of cultural violence (see chapter two) and social breakdown (see chapter three). Oxfam, in response to an epidemic of suicide attempts in Narrogin, WA,⁵³ in 2008, temporarily relaxed this position and provided short-term funding for an Aboriginal psychologist and two Aboriginal support counsellors, while advocating that the government pick up the funding. Oxfam's media release explains:

As an international development agency, Oxfam Australia does not usually provide essential services in our own country. But in this instance, we felt we had an overriding responsibility to support the community's request for assistance. (Oxfam Australia 2008b: 1)

The Fred Hollows Foundation illustrates how this tricky area of unfulfilled government responsibility can be approached through engagement with government rather than demarcation. Eye surgery is government responsibility. The Foundation works in eye health in collaboration with government health agencies, medical associations and Aboriginal organisations.

We have assisted Alice Springs Hospital with resources. We have a Steering Committee which has representatives from Commonwealth and NT Departments of Health, local Aboriginal community-controlled health services and The Foundation as Chair ... We have put a person in there to organise it. So they help people by going out into the communities, talking to people who need surgery, organising their transport, organising their accommodation. The project supports the local ophthalmologist by flying in a couple of extra surgeons and support staff

⁵³ Narrogin is a rural town in southern Western Australia. Aboriginal Australians represent at least 8% of the population of 4,238 (ABS 2007: 48).

and they perform procedures to address the backlog. The local ophthalmologist and local staff are there to provide any necessary follow up and support. And the Committee learns about what works and is able to transfer that learning to similar situations. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

In other situations the First World standards set by the government to protect citizens appear to be disincentives to even consider assistance. Water and sanitation infrastructure is an example. Aid agencies working on physical infrastructure projects in developing countries take an incremental improvement approach. A water and sanitation specialist I spoke with observed that in Timor everyone agrees that some improvement is of benefit, while here in Australia, standards for water quality must be fully met by any intervention or the aid agency is liable (Field notes: 19 Sept. 2007). In Australia the system designed to protect universal rights prevents aid agencies from incrementally working towards them for Aboriginal people.

Entry points to work with an Aboriginal community are by invitation, but ad hoc: As mentioned earlier, one participant notes that in Third World countries the usual agency entry points are around livelihoods. This is not the case in Australia. Three factors for this were suggested: the relatively lesser value of the Australian dollar within Australia compared to developing countries; the impact of welfare dependency; and the degree of Aboriginal exclusion from the mainstream economy (Participant B – Oxfam). The impact of the welfare state including welfare dependency is discussed below.

Impact of the welfare state: The existence of the welfare state in Australia is designed to temper the worst effects of poverty. It provides a safety-net of income and support services for low income and vulnerable people. It is frequently identified as a contextual difference between Australia and developing countries. As discussed in chapter three recent critiques argue that the welfare state perpetuates poverty and compounds it with social breakdown (Pearson 2000). In addition poor policy generates a welfare trap of disincentives to incrementally increase income which can be quantified in the EMTR as discussed in chapter three (Opportunity International 2004). Participants observe that welfare dependency provides a contextual difference between Aboriginal and international development:

There is serious social breakdown in many communities ... At one level Noel Pearson is right about the welfare dependency problem [discussed in chapter three]. It's something which doesn't manifest itself in indigenous communities in developing countries. (Participant B – Oxfam)

Appearance that government funds are available, but in reality money is difficult to get: In chapter five I described the impact of neo-liberalism on the policy context of government contracts for Aboriginal service provision. The government separates the process of project design from the process of project implementation, and then quarantines design and implementation through a tendering process. This 'best practice' in contract management provides a 'level playing field' for competition meeting the needs of the market. It is the antithesis of project design arising from participatory planning, context analysis and two-way learning between the developer and the beneficiary which ensures lasting development (described in chapters two and three). One participant notes that government funding does not match the agency approach of community engagement:

government designed tenders ... [haven't] fitted our approach to community development. Often government funding doesn't give you all the time for initial engagement and the design stage. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

For communities, time delays between funding being promised, and funding arriving in the community can betray trust and expectations built up through participatory planning, and shame Aboriginal workers.

The thing that is really different from overseas is that [in Australia] there is money [but] its very hard to get ... We submit government tenders, and are given a positive response that yes it is going to happen ... [Delays] can cause major problems for Aboriginal people involved. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

The Fred Hollows Foundation (2002: 22, 28) has documented frustration that established and effective nutrition and financial literacy programs could not secure government funding.

Developer as coloniser

Aid agencies are part of the context: Participants identify that when working in Aboriginal development in Australia, as Australian citizens they are part of the context. Aboriginal Australians have not won independence, and Australia continues to be a "(never quite post) colonial country" (Haggis 2004). Aid agencies represent the colonisers who have not withdrawn – the First World which encapsulates the Fourth World. This presents a significantly different relationship

than when Australians work overseas. “When I worked in Vietnam, I just arrive into the country. When I work in Australia I am a part of the problem” (Participants C and D – World Vision).

Another participant indicates that when aid agencies employ Aboriginal Australians the aid agency experiences the very tension between mainstream and Aboriginal worldviews with which their Aboriginal activities deals. The aid agency’s employment practices reveal its mainstream position, competing with Aboriginal ways.

We have had a lot of staff issues ... It’s certainly learning for a non Aboriginal organisation ... Ways of working need to be redeveloped and agreed upon to deal with different expectations and cultural norms. (Participant A – Oxfam)

Participants reflect that Aboriginal development work is practiced differently – that it is not consistent with international work. Oxfam’s (2004a) report discussed in chapter five indicated a lack of attention to ‘environmental scanning’ and basic program logic. Participants identify that Aboriginal development work lacks basic community development (to establish representative organisations); lacks hard work on partnerships; and lacks an emphasis on developing people who then sustain further change without the aid agencies.

International observers notice this inconsistency. One participant reports a colleague from Bangladesh described Australia in these terms:

‘What you are doing with the indigenous people here is parking the ambulance at the foot of the cliff. Catching the bodies as they come over, and giving them a decent burial. Not saying – why is it happening, how do we do something about that – which acknowledges history. (pers. comm. ACFID member)

The same participant observes the lack of Aboriginal participation and control:

People get sent to teach in indigenous communities. If they were going to teach in China or Africa, they would get cultural training ... If we made an approach to go into a third world country – the training, the preparation, and the expertise – it would be totally different. And that training and expertise would be driven by the Africans, the Indians, by the people we are going to work with ... So we don’t apply the same learnings here. (pers. comm. ACFID member)

Aboriginal people have to have input. Not just be the recipients of [developers’] expertise. NGOs apply that internationally. It’s rule 1, book 1, page 1. When it comes to this [Aboriginal development] stuff, it’s not. And that fundamental disconnect is because NGOs can’t help but be members of the Australian community. (pers. comm. ACFID member)

What is it about aid agencies being members of the Australian community that results in these inconsistencies? According to this participant, it is a manifestation of *Whiteness*:

There is an assumption that because Aboriginal people are in Australia they are somehow *ours*. (pers. comm. ACFID member)

One participant implies that working within Australia lacks an outsider's detachment, "an element of objectivity that you can have in a place that's not your own that allows you to do some effective work" (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation). This was not meant to devalue the importance of understanding which comes from longstanding relationships with communities. It was the recognition that non-Aboriginal workers in Aboriginal development can become enmeshed in many variations of the angst described in chapter five.

Another participant recalls that development in the 1970s was constrained by Western notions of traditional Aboriginal society as utopian:

Part of our assumptions about indigenous Australia is that people want to work in communities. Development organisations in the 70s suffered from being caught in that communal/consensual model that was in favour at the time. It has really done a disservice. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

As noted earlier in this chapter Aboriginal marginalisation limits the potential for genuine partnerships. Is it enough to explain the lack of hard work on partnerships observed above? It was also noted that there is a multiplicity of existing Aboriginal representative organisations. Does that explain the lack of basic community development observed above? There are no simple answers to explain some of these inconsistencies. By raising and beginning to explore the inconsistencies I hope to advance a discussion which leads to a better understanding of the actual limitations, and which differentiates them from perceived limitations to the transfer.

Differences within Australia: Urban, rural and remote Aboriginal contexts

At the outset of the research I was aware that discussion of anything Aboriginal by mainstream Australians tends to gravitate towards remote communities. Given my experience of poverty in urban and rural areas, and my limited understanding of remote areas, I did not want to take this road even if that was where the participants' responses directed me. Therefore I explicitly asked participants: *How*

does locality play out within Australia? In what way does urban, rural, and remote context make a difference?

All participants recognise diversity amongst Aboriginal Australians. Participants express great clarity about difference in relation to government policy:

[Mainstream Australians] ... presume a common Aboriginal experience ... That's where the real policy challenge is for moving forward, the recognition of difference. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

From a policy perspective one participant suggests that to assume Aboriginal people are the same is like assuming all members of the European Union and the Greeks and the Fins are the same, and that one policy fits all (pers. comm. ACFID member).

Another participant reaffirms the importance of context in development work, indicating that any activity begins with context analysis:

There are so many different indigenous groups in Australia in so many different situations ... The first thing that is drummed into you in the international scene is *context, context, context*. What is the context in which you are working? There is a real failure to recognise that in Australia. That working in Redfern is very different to working in Moree, as is working in Arnhem Land or Central Australia or the Kimberley. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

As noted throughout this chapter, the work of the aid agencies includes recognition of the importance of identity, regardless of geographical location. This indicates an implicit understanding of the universal importance of locally determined identity.

Only one participant describes a framework for understanding what this might mean for work with different Aboriginal peoples within Australia. The participant (ACFID member) describes that on a map of Australia (according to Aboriginal leader and Sydney Peace Prize winner 2008, Patrick Dodson) you can draw a line between Cairns and Perth.⁵⁴ On the northern side of the line people are trying to hang on to what they have got, and on the southern side people are trying to get back what was taken; and every year the line moves up.

⁵⁴ Appendix A provides a map of Australia indicating Cairns in the north-east and Perth in the south-west.

This way of making sense of Aboriginal Australia does not imply that Aboriginal Australians fall into one of two homogenous groups. There is both diversity and mobility among Aboriginal Australians. However it does provide a more strategic way to conceive development:

It's a good frame to get policy makers to think – OK – you need a different strategy in Redfern to that which you would need in the Kimberley, if it is about retaining culture and identity ... If we operate out of *that frame* before we operate about health, education, welfare, and then we can do both together. (pers. comm. ACFID member)

Another participant indicated that physical barriers to access services exist in remote areas, and cultural barriers to access services exist in all areas. Also that integration in the national economy is weakest in remote areas, and greatest in urban areas (Participant B – Oxfam). Many participants saw remote contexts as providing additional challenges: extreme poverty (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation), that English was not a language in common with the aid agency (Participants C and D – World Vision), and that identifying strengths and skills was more difficult in unfamiliar (i.e. remote) environments (Participants C and D – World Vision).

There were two problems with the way I asked about working in different contexts which may account for the relatively limited responses. The first is that I assumed the aid agencies had a breadth of experience with activities in urban, rural and remote contexts. Therefore I did not ask participants to describe where their agencies worked before I asked them about working in different contexts. This may have been an unreasonable assumption. Agency documents indicate that Oxfam and the Fred Hollows Foundation both plan to increase their work outside remote areas: Oxfam in urban and regional areas because “approximately two-thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live in urban and regional towns” (Oxfam Australia 2007b: 17) and the Fred Hollows Foundation specifically in western NSW (Fred Hollows Foundation 2007a: 1).

The second problem is that I did not identify that some work happens without a locality or discrete geographical place. It is neither urban nor rural or remote. Like this research, as I discussed in chapter four, it occurs in a space rather than a place. Oxfam provides diverse examples: an international indigenous health study tour (which I will discuss in chapter seven); an emerging Aboriginal health leaders

workshop (see Appendix D, example 6); enabling Aboriginal participation in the Oxfam International Youth Partnerships (Oxfam Australia n.d.e: 1); and enabling Aboriginal participation in the Asia Pacific Indigenous Youth Network Forum in the Philippines (Oxfam Australia 2007d: 1).

One participant may have been alluding to space when describing assumptions about Aboriginal colleagues in urban and rural areas. The participant noted that Aboriginal colleagues may have equal or greater skills and education levels than their non-Aboriginal colleagues. Equally that Aboriginal colleagues may be assumed to have more skills and education levels than is the case (Participants C and D – World Vision). If I had asked an additional question about space, I may well have elicited responses which would have provided a clearer and fuller picture.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that participants value international development as a resource for Aboriginal development. I have also identified some of the factors in Australia which are important contextual considerations in the transfer: different worldviews and marginalisation, the impact of a developed state, and position of developer as coloniser. Interestingly Aboriginal lack of sovereignty, the only contextual difference noted in chapter three (Dillon and Westbury 2007), was not explicitly identified. I have also shown that participants observed inconsistencies in Aboriginal and international work which were not adequately explained.

The chapter also touched on how urban, rural and remote contexts affect the transfer, and identified that as well as places, many activities happen in spaces, and that these may represent another context again.

In the following chapter I consider international development principles, policies and practices which aid agencies transfer to Aboriginal development work in Australia.

Chapter seven: Lessons from international development

Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined limits to the transfer of international development to Aboriginal poverty reduction, and how aid agency practitioners see the impact of urban, rural and remote differences within Australia. In this chapter I examine international development principles, policies and practices which aid agencies transfer to Aboriginal development work. It is exploratory and not a definitive examination. It is a starting point for further discussion.

I have ordered these into two parts: what they do and how they do it. The skills required for what aid agencies do can be learned through instruction – they are technical. *How* they do it, the implementation processes, relies on values rather than skills. Aid agencies facilitate processes without which the techniques of what they do are just another limiting factor. These values are not technical, but can be learned, often through transformative experiences. I conclude by discussing tensions in how *what* they do and *how* they do it.

What they do

Development versus humanitarian relief

Aid agencies order their work into two fundamental activities: either international development or humanitarian relief. This reflects Korten's (1990) first two phases of NGOs: relief and welfare, and community development which I discussed in chapters two and five. The organisational structure of aid agencies typically separates international development and humanitarian relief, which suggests that *how* the work is done is more important than the commonalities of *where* it is done. As noted in chapter five, the Fred Hollows Foundation's eye surgery can be seen as humanitarian relief to restore sight and simultaneously as development work through health and medical training.

Development work aims to create change to address the causes of poverty, not the symptoms. The planning is in-depth and local engagement is critical. The expected

timeframe is long term. Humanitarian relief aims to address the symptoms of poverty – to save lives which are under immediate threat in emergency situations such as famines. In an emergency, speed is important. The planning is quick which limits local engagement. The expected timeframe is short term.

Oxfam, World Vision and the Fred Hollows Foundation all characterise their Aboriginal activities as development. They emphasise a long-term approach, and a partnership rather than a top-down approach, initiated at the invitation of Aboriginal Australians.

The distinction between development and humanitarian relief in international work is paralleled by a distinction in Aboriginal activities between capacity building and delivering services. This distinction is reflected in the title of ATSIC's paper: *Changing Perspectives in ATSIC: from service delivery to capacity development*, discussed in chapter three (ATSIC 2001; see also Dillon 2000).

Many participants aligned themselves with capacity building, implicitly criticising the activity of delivering services. I was slow to understand the dichotomy between the two, and what was wrong with delivering services. My experience in Redfern with community-based NGOs during the 1990s was that service delivery and capacity building were mutually supportive, not mutually exclusive. The organisational development of a community-based organisation – its human resources development (staff and management committees), the increased agency of clients, staff and management committees, its local networking, and its advocacy on many levels – was all part and parcel of our ongoing work. It was not separate from the running of an effective and relevant service for the community. Capacity building was an impact of the processes which facilitated delivering services. Only when the government funding changed, so that our organisation's income became tied to achieving predetermined outcomes per client, did the organisation place less priority on our relevance to the community as a whole. These changes in our organisation reflected the 'market-solutions based policy' (Walter 2007) discussed in chapter three, and the same tension that aid agencies face as a government contractor (Hunt and Schwab 2007) discussed in chapter five.

Through this research I came to understand the elusive term ‘capacity building’ as defined by what it is not; it is *not* delivering services. Capacity building is seen as development work which addresses causes of poverty. Service delivery is seen as providing relief of the symptoms. In Third World countries, aid agencies would call service delivery ‘humanitarian relief’. In the First World it is known as welfare. In Australia, the state is responsible for the administration of welfare and aid agencies distance themselves from this approach. One participant indicates that the management of development requires a completely different approach to the administration of welfare:

Why don’t we send AusAID into some of the communities in rural and remote Australia and develop plans to address poverty and disadvantage? Why don’t we let our development thinkers loose to work with indigenous groups, rather than making it an administrative issue? (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

The clarity that international development thinking provides between humanitarian relief (to address symptoms) and development (to address causes) may be useful for Australian policy makers. Are policies designed to provide welfare now or to foster change for the future? The same question is: Do policies address the symptoms of poverty or the causes? Asking this question may reduce the ‘policy confusion’ identified by Pearson (2000) referred to in chapter three.

At times when aid agencies’ Aboriginal activities overlap with service delivery it is explained as a ‘dual track’ strategy:

[The eye health program] is about attempting to work with local services to ensure they are able to effectively provide the services. It is not about The Foundation undertaking the provision of those services. In the longer term the Fred Hollows Foundation will support the establishment of a locally controlled eye health facility in Central Australia. And the Aboriginal Medical Services [AMS] will first determine the design, location, etc. to ensure it is appropriate to local needs. The Foundation will put money into an NT facility in Alice Springs, but only if the AMSs say they are happy. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

Participants identify a number of ways of understanding poverty, including the sustainable livelihoods and human rights frameworks noted by one participant in chapter six. In addition, an Oxfam participant explained:

There are common reasons why people [who Oxfam works with] are poor or marginalised. People are poor because of denial of one or more of those rights [to sustainable livelihoods, basic services, security, a voice and identity] – whether they are in indigenous Australia or communities in developing countries around the world. (Participant B – Oxfam)

Each framework implies different development activities for an agency. For example the sustainable livelihoods approach reflects interconnectedness and access to assets, while the human rights approach directs attention towards policy change and government accountability to institutionalise rights.

Invitations, readiness and partnerships

Invitations: As noted in chapter five the aid agencies characterise their Aboriginal engagement as in response to an invitation. World Vision activities typically began after an intermediary contacted World Vision on behalf of a particular Aboriginal community. Intermediaries ranged from a local Member of Parliament to ATSIC and the Central Lands Council. The Fred Hollows Foundation *Indigenous Program NT Strategic Framework* (2007a: 3) similarly states that activities “respond to community requests for support and assistance rather than attempting to impose these on communities”.

Readiness and capability: World Vision indicates that readiness is associated with motivation to change. Armadale, WA, was “a community that was motivated to help themselves. And so that’s why we’ve decided that this would be a really good community to partner with” (Sheldon Rankin quoted in Tucak 2004: online).

A Fred Hollows Foundation report provides insight into the complexities of assessing readiness and that it is a two-way street. The aid agency’s readiness includes capacity to work with a particular community. This can depend on engaging a person with a previous relationship with that community. The report notes:

The lesson we have learnt from there is that we have to be really careful about going into a community unless they are really able to work with us and we can work with them. (Sullivan et al. 2005: 175)

The report also indicates that invitations do not guarantee community readiness. It is important to understand:

who initiated this [invitation], and if initiated by the community whether the invitation had adequate community support and was followed up with appropriate processes to ensure community ownership of the decisions taken. (Sullivan et al. 2005: 175)

Partnerships: The terms ‘working in partnership’, ‘program partners’, ‘partnership initiatives’ and ‘partnering’ with Aboriginal Australians reoccurred throughout interviews with participants and in aid agency documents⁵⁵.

The Fred Hollows Foundation (2008c: 4) describes their approach:

The Indigenous program works only in partnerships with Indigenous organisations. Using a partnership approach we aim to empower the communities to realise their own successes. We see ourselves as a resource for our partners, so they have the tools to do the work they have identified as priorities.

However in practice, like invitations, partnerships are difficult. As indicated in chapter six, the Fourth World context and the marginalisation of Aboriginal worldviews mean Aboriginal Australians do not bring equal power to partnerships.

Phrases such as *working in partnership* can gloss over competing voices (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007). The NTER, discussed in chapter three, provoked Aboriginal responses which were diverse, passionate, and which presented conflicting positions. As a policy initiative the NTER is top-down and the opposite of the ‘partnership’, bottom-up and community development approaches of the aid agencies. Aid agencies with many Aboriginal ‘partners’ and as many responses, did not have a single partner-endorsed response to the NTER. Ultimately the practice of partnerships raises questions of control/power when Aboriginal views are diverse and not aligned with the aid agency’s views, whether in response to external issues such as the NTER, or the agency’s internal management of Aboriginal programs.

To what extent does one make oneself subservient to the Aboriginal voice, because it is Aboriginal, even if you don’t agree? If we’ve got a clear view on something, that is legitimate. But at what point are those partners going to want to assert a greater role, regionally, about policy and expansion decisions, than the Sydney office? (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation)

The above discussion does not invalidate the value of the partnerships approach, nor the importance of aid agencies forging a new practice, particularly as an alternative to government approaches. It simply demonstrates that in practice partnerships are complex, time consuming and resource intensive. They also require aid agencies to continue to ask themselves uncomfortable questions,

⁵⁵ Aboriginal Australians were not the aid agencies only ‘partners’. The term was also used to describe a range of stakeholders including government departments, government funders and corporate sponsors.

including about what Aboriginal control means within the aid agencies (pers. comm. ACFID member).

Community development and participation

A consistent message from participants is that top-down approaches do not work and that bottom-up approaches guide their work. Participants emphasise that “communities themselves, understanding and driving their own change agenda”, are more effective than “imposing change agendas on people because it doesn’t work” (Participant B – Oxfam). Participatory planning processes provide a mechanism for this.

[W]e don’t necessarily go in with a constructed idea, but have a process of engaging community people about what they want to do and working around their timeframe. So, empowering people, sensitive to gender, environment type of issues ... The whole approach that we have is very much run by the people themselves. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

Participatory planning methods emphasise local people’s role not only as participants, but also in running participatory processes. This may require train the trainer programs. The “scale of work needed to do it properly” (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation) contrasts with the ad hoc approach to the planning of the 1980s, as one participant recounts:

I was told to go and do a community plan in Balgo.⁵⁶ So off I drive and I came away in two days. These are complex communities we are working in. If you really want to engage people in a way that there are identified and agreed things you are going to try and do, it takes time and you need resources. (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation)

This description of an ad hoc two-day planning process contrasts with a recent activity with a two-year preparation (context analysis, learning and design) phase, which also reflects an asset-based community development (Mathie and Cunningham 2003) approach described in chapter two:

When we first went into Central Australia, we knew that they did ceremony for two months of the year around Christmas – *regional*. We knew someone is organising that. They have the strongest football team in the region. Someone is organising that. We knew there has been a period where lots of people have worked and now they are not working so they must of had skills when they were working. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

⁵⁶ Balgo is a remote community in the east Kimberley, WA, with a population of 462 people (ABS 2007: 47). It is a former Catholic mission.

Gender

Participants mention gender as important in Aboriginal development activities, and agency documents support this. Documents indicate the agencies run specific activities for women, such as the Fred Hollows Foundation project which produced the Women's Centres Report (Fred Hollows Foundation 2007b). They also support specific activities for men, such as health and social support for Stolen Generation members who were removed as boys to the Kinchela Boys Home (World Vision Australia 2007a: 13), and Yorgam's men's healing program (Oxfam Australia 2006).

Advocacy

Participants all describe advocacy as integral to their work. Closer examination shows this happens in four different ways: unplanned advocacy concerns bearing witness; opportunistic advocacy responds to invitation for public comment; twin-track advocacy provides advocacy as a parallel strategy to local work; and campaigns set out to change policy. In each case the advocacy described was largely directed at governments.

Bearing witness – unanticipated advocacy: The least planned advocacy happens when the agency is involved in local work and compelled either to assist the community to exercise its voice, or to let the government know what it has witnessed in the practice of its work. It requires flexibility to respond to changing circumstances (flexibility is also discussed later in this chapter).

One participant describes giving a voice to local people:

The community is on excised land⁵⁷ from the station. When we were there the station was sold and bought. There were a whole lot of issues and you go through these with everyone ... you are kind of a part of it. When the station was being sold we were able to take a number of key community people down to Alice Springs to talk to Aboriginal land bodies about what was happening and to expose them and give them a voice in different arenas. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

Participants see a responsibility both to the communities they are working with, and to the government the agencies are in regular communication with, to report

⁵⁷ The community's land is surrounded by a privately owned station. The only land access in or out is through the station. Right of passage was not guaranteed when the station was sold.

the impact of government policy. In the same remote community mentioned above, when CDEP funding ceased:

There was no one to coordinate basic services such as rubbish collection, community maintenance, repairs, training opportunities, or to manage the main source of employment for 40 adults. As a consequence, isolation and despair took over. (World Vision Australia 2007c: 76)

The impact that has on communities on the ground, people like World Vision and other people operating, we know the impact it is having. We talk to people every day so getting that message to government is critical. We have a responsibility to do that. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

Because governments in a First World country have responsibilities to citizens, aid agencies have obligations to inform government “so the government is aware that gaps exist and need to be filled” (Participants C and D – World Vision). Advocacy which bears witness is compelled by obligations to the community and the government. To maintain silence, if you have borne witness, is an act of withholding.

Opportunistic advocacy: Advocacy also responds to invitations for public comment. In 2008 the Australian government’s NTER 12 Month Review provided an opportunity for Oxfam to bear witness and advocate alternatives. Another example is when World Vision’s Birrung Aboriginal art gallery provided a submission to a 2007 senate inquiry into the indigenous art industry. It provided testimony of Aboriginal arts experience, unethical conduct in the industry, and the gallery’s initiatives to improve industry practice.

Other Oxfam submissions in response to government inquiries include:

- Submission to Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities (Oxfam Australia 2008f)
- Submission to the Senate Select Committee on the Administration of Indigenous Affairs (Oxfam Australia 2004b)
- Comments on ATSIC Review Panel Discussion Paper (Oxfam Community Aid Abroad 2003).

Twin-track advocacy: Advocacy can be proactive rather than reactive, occurring at the same time as community development. Oxfam applied this ‘twin-track’ approach to reduce petrol sniffing on Mornington Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland. Community development activities reduced demand for petrol as a

mood altering substance, while “at the same time we were doing work to get OPAL [non-sniffable fuel] to the island and non-OPAL petrol off the island” (Participant A – Oxfam). This reflects Watson’s (2001) dual strategy described in chapter two.

Campaigns and public comment: Campaigns, such as the Aboriginal health equity campaign Close the Gap (described in chapter five), are designed to generate the political will for change. The Close the Gap campaign successfully gained government commitment to increase funds and to develop a national plan in partnership with Aboriginal people.

Public comment may be used in providing a watchdog role on the government. For example when the government commitment to the Close the Gap partnership did not translate into action, Oxfam’s Executive Director commented that “this partnership and this plan, essential if progress is to be made, has yet to appear” (Hewett 2008).

Public comment may also be used to educate the public, as in the example (used earlier in this chapter) of World Vision CEO Tim Costello’s comment that Aboriginal Australians will always resist progress and development when it means “abandoning culture and assimilating into Western world view and way of life” (cited in Robinson 2008: online).

Limitations to advocacy: As I discussed in chapter five, aid agencies’ public comment can be constrained by their financial relationship with government and their immersion in the broader Australian context. One of the impacts of the neo-liberal ideology discussed in chapter three has been the relocation of services from small rural towns throughout Australia to larger regional centres. For example in Goodooga in north-western NSW the local health service was threatened with closure in 2008. Aboriginal Australians are at least 80% of the Goodooga population of 269 people (ABS 2007: 24). Aboriginal Australians in smaller rural towns lose services as a result.

NGOs don’t see any role in confronting policies which move facilities from Aboriginal communities to towns where [non-Aboriginal people] ... live. (pers. comm. ACFID member)

Is this limitation to advocacy also about aid agencies *being part of the context*? Is it about directing resources into campaigns which are seen as winnable? Is it easier to advocate on Aboriginal specific issues such as those which impact on discrete remote communities or Aboriginal specific services? Is it more difficult to advocate on mainstream issues which marginalise poor Australians (such as the welfare trap) and rural Australians in smaller towns, even though those issues disproportionately impact on Aboriginal Australians?

The tool box

Noting a historical lack of expectation of outcomes in Aboriginal activities, one participant is resolute that good management is required:

If you are going to take money as a development organisation, and say you are going to achieve this goal, you need good management of that program. Including the upskilling of the people involved in the implementation, so capacity building is now a huge part of what we do. And you have to be really hard nosed. (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation)

Participants identify a number of international development management tools which can be transferred to Aboriginal development practice. Some of the specific tools they mention include the logframe, participatory rural appraisal, Most Significant Change technique, and sustainable livelihoods frameworks.

The logframe: In chapter two I described the logframe which has become a standard in international development project management. I also mentioned in chapter five that Oxfam's (2004a) review of its Aboriginal program indicated the importance of applying basic program logic to Aboriginal activities. World Vision's program logic, consistent with the logframe, is called Learning through Evaluation with Accountability and Planning (LEAP) (World Vision Australia 2007a: 15; WVDRT 2005). The LEAP process includes stages to design, implement and monitor, evaluate, and reflect. World Vision applies this to its international and Aboriginal activities:

[World Vision's Aboriginal programs] used the same international development project management cycle to develop projects, so feasibility, design, appraisals, monitoring, evaluation. All that project management cycle that is used at AusAID, that is the type of structure we had with programs here. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

One of the components of the logframe is a structured and ongoing situation or context analysis conducted with the project beneficiaries.

Participatory rural appraisal: Participatory rural appraisal, also discussed in chapter two, is a form of situation analysis which values local knowledge and the analytical and creative problem-solving abilities of the poor (Chambers 1994).

[W]ith the big program in Central Australia, we had gone in and gone through a whole Participatory Appraisal approach ... at first some people would come and then once we started doing the language [translation] a few more people would come because they could understand it ... People had never gone through anything like that before. There was a lot of activity and people were interested. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

Most Significant Change technique: One of the challenges identified in the ATSIC discussion paper (2001: 19) on capacity building discussed in chapter three, is the need to shift project management away from the existing emphasis on *outputs*, and towards an emphasis on *impacts*. Oxfam evaluates the impact of its Aboriginal activities using the Most Significant Change technique (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007). This technique uses storytelling to describe the impact of activities on lived experience, and captures the beneficiaries' view including unintended impacts (Dart and Davies 2003). The Most Significant Change technique is well suited to environments where the worldview of beneficiaries and program managers differ, because the voices of those impacted are directly reported. It can also be used to jointly monitor projects, which was an area suggested for exploration by Hunt (2006) in chapter three. World Vision (2008a: 18) uses the Most Significant Change in international work.

Sustainable livelihoods approach: One participant also suggested that livelihoods approaches or frameworks discussed in chapter two (Chambers 1995; DFID 1999) are relevant to Aboriginal development (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation). The sustainable livelihoods framework has been transferred by the Centre for Appropriate Technology Alice Springs and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (DKCRC 2009).

How they do it

In the preceding discussion I identified some of the technical elements that aid agencies transfer to Australia. Now I discuss the processes or non-technical elements they say are important – processes which create and maintain effective

working relationships between an aid agency and Aboriginal Australians, and so sustain activities.

These processes, or values, although discussed as a list are not separable, but interconnected. They are pieces of the same puzzle. The ones I have identified here do not make a whole picture. They are only a few pieces: listening, meanings, time, flexibility, transformative experiences, identity and trust as illustrated in Figure 7.1. I recognise these from my experience as the ability to work cross-culturally, or in a space between different worldviews. They create and maintain a ‘third space’ which escapes black and white (either-or) thinking, described in chapter two (Bhabha 1995). As one participant observes:

A lot of effectiveness of development practice is you as the agent. Who you are and how you operate. ... The methodology of development practice, as distinct from community development, and development work. That there were certain skills and understanding you needed to have as a practitioner. And we were never taught that. (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation)

These processes also relate closely to ACFID’s *NGO Effectiveness Framework* described in chapter two (Kelly and Chapman n.d.). Its common principles include quality relationships and long-term engagement, learning, adaptation and responsiveness to changing circumstance, and risk. When I first read these principles over two years ago, I dismissed them as self-evident or commonsense.

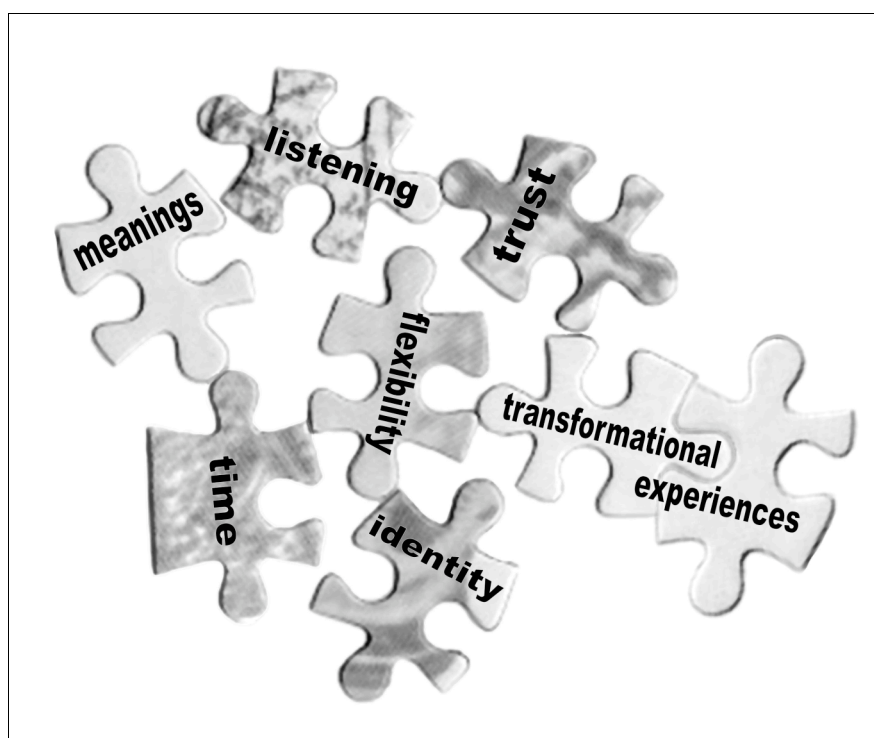


Figure 7.1: Some elements of effective implementation processes

However as I heard them discussed in the practice of others, their significance as practices which could be fostered and protected, if they were made explicit and then valued, became clear to me. They are not incidental. They are critical success factors, essential to effective development work.

Listening and meanings

Listening and hearing are different. Hearing registers sound. Listening makes meaning from what is said. There are many situations where it is possible to hear but not listen. Aboriginal and mainstream worldviews are different. If the mainstream hearer understands that theirs is not the only worldview, then listening is an opportunity for learning. If the mainstream hearer does not understand that Aboriginal worldviews are different, or does not accept that Aboriginal worldviews have a legitimate place in the future of Australia, then listening is not possible.

Participants recognise this is a common and frustrating Aboriginal experience:

They [community leaders] are smart people. But over time perhaps they had got to a point of: 'How many times can we say it and it doesn't happen?' (Participants C and D – World Vision)

The community said: 'No' [to the government's plan]. 'We have our own agenda and we have been working on this for a number of years and the government has been deaf'. (Participant B – Oxfam)

Aboriginal women experience this doubly. A Fred Hollows Foundation report documents women's views about the impact of policy changes in their community. The report indicates that "Women believe they have not been listened to: 'We are asking and asking for support, but nobody is listening'" (Fred Hollows Foundation 2007b: 10).

Working towards mutual understanding between aid agencies and beneficiaries in both international and Aboriginal contexts is a complex process, as one participant identifies:

There needs to be some agreed clarity at the beginning about what both parties' role is – so that what you are trying to achieve through the partnership is agreed. That is very hard to do. We all say 'yes', and we think we understand something the same way, and we don't really. (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation)

A World Vision (2007c: 76) report equally notes:

It has been essential to invest substantial time and energy into clarifying the respective obligations of the community members and World Vision as each step of the project has evolved.

One participant implies that getting the preparation processes right is not only about effectiveness, but also reduces the chance of failure:

How sustainable it is to do this everywhere is another interesting argument in itself. But we honestly felt that if we had not put in the time at this beginning stage, we would just be contributing to more of the same. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

The same participant describes listening to Aboriginal people as an active rather than passive process from which the development practitioner and the aid agency learns:

We recognised many concepts, that we have as non-indigenous people, differ. For example, a thing like *the future*. In a lot of program work even overseas we talk about goals and what we want in three years. So the whole concept of *future* was explored, because ‘future’ in this particular community was not a concept as we understand it. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

Participants also indicate that they facilitate the listening of others, acting as an interlocutor or intermediary. This again links to advocacy. For example Oxfam funded an Aboriginal health peak body to employ a non-Aboriginal doctor to put health policy to government because the government is more comfortable talking with doctors than with Aboriginal health workers or elders who represent Aboriginal health organisations. However the doctor was also a listener.

[He] had very strong trust and credibility and experience in Aboriginal communities. He worked from a great community, bottom-up way to ensure that the policies that were being developed in the WA Health department, and also through OATSIH⁵⁸ had greater relevance and were embedded in the experiences and best practice in terms of medical treatments and approaches. (Participant A – Oxfam)

Another participant describes an activity as building bridges:

between individual communities and mainstream service providers so that they can both understand each other’s perspectives and needs better. And it’s really simple stuff ... Just bringing people together. (Participant B – Oxfam)

Time and flexibility

Time and flexibility are interrelated. Time and flexibility demonstrate understanding through appropriate actions in response to experiences during the relationship. Aid agencies clearly document and participants reinforce the importance of time and flexibility in Aboriginal activities. Olga Havnen, former Indigenous Programs Manager of the Fred Hollows Foundation, argues: “This work

⁵⁸ OATSIH is the Australian government Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

is complex and slow; it needs time, flexibility, responsiveness and long-term commitment” (cited in Sullivan et al. 2005: i).

Long-term engagement for Australian aid agencies is eight to ten years on average (ACFID 2004). This is a striking and important contrast to the experience of community-based NGOs receiving Australian government funding, including Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. Government commitments to program expenditure may be long term, however, that commitment is not passed from government to the community-controlled organisations, which are funded annually or at most every three years. This funding uncertainty has the effect of undermining the ability of community-controlled organisations to commit to long-term community development which is required for lasting change.

The Fred Hollows Foundation (2002: 21) submission about capacity building describes the need for flexibility:

It is important that agencies working with communities are flexible in responding to changing community needs and priorities. For example, a common problem for communities and agencies is the inflexibility of funding regimes. Funding may be granted for a particular purpose for only one year, but for a range of reasons (e.g. difficulty of recruiting staff, the death of a key person ...) the community may not be able to expend the money as intended within that time frame. Changing circumstances within the community may also result in a change of priorities. Supporting agencies need to be flexible in working with communities and be able to respond to changes of direction if sought be [sic] the community.

To maintain relevance to the lived experience of the community, timeframes may need to be suspended as community priorities change. Priorities change in response to internal and external events, and the aid agency’s work needs to adapt. One participant describes an external event (a policy change) which resulted in a community crisis:

Also many things happened over this two-year period, like policies changing – the CDEP business [discussed earlier which led to community isolation and despair]. We had a whole lot of things happen. So then people are angry or frustrated, or they are busy doing this or doing that. It was complex. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

In this instance the planned timeframe was suspended and new activities were developed which responded to the crisis. These have cost implications for the agency, and require development practitioners with the flexibility and range of skills to take on new tasks.

An Oxfam report of its Gulf Regional Health Service indicates that flexibility is valued, noting the program “plays different roles depending on what is required”, has “flexible project funding for small activities which nurtures innovation, responds quickly to community needs” and that “staff are seen as being flexible and helpful when possible” (Oxfam Australia and Searle 2007: 3).

One participant indicates that time and flexibility (together with pre-existing relationships) support community participation.

We did a health needs assessment. We went to every household and knocked on every door ... Some of the community knew [the Aboriginal consultants] as well. They were able to explain what was happening and why it was happening. People were able to have quite a lot of say. It was fantastic. But to be able to do it, it means time and flexibility. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

A World Vision (2007a: 79) report implies that the flexibility required of staff is outside the mainstream worldview, in that “professional and personal involvement” should and can be separated.

While World Vision is proud of the progress the Wetenngerr community has made, the costs associated with this process have been high in time, resources and pressure on staff, particularly in the field. It has been almost *impossible to separate professional from personal involvement* in contexts such as these and the engagement is demanding. [emphasis added]

Transformative experiences and identity

As mentioned in chapter six, some participants who had worked in Aboriginal development describe transformative experiences when they encountered international development thinking. Such experiences can also change the identity of non-Aboriginal development practitioners, and of aid agencies.

One participant explains how Aboriginal development work has fundamentally changed how the participant sees being Australian, and how Australian and Aboriginal identity are shaped by the Whitening of Australian history:

There is a whole network and layer of Aboriginal culture and Aboriginality within the country that non-Aboriginal people, or very few, ever have any exposure to. By doing the work that we do, you get a small insight into that ... [T]here is a whole way that Aboriginal people live in this country which is quite different to how non-Aboriginal people live in it ...

I often consider as a person living in Australia *what is my understanding of the history of the country?* Perhaps non Indigenous have been driven toward nationalism and a connection to the country at the expense of Aboriginal people, to the extreme point where government historical programs just did not talk about them.

Also from a government perspective we have all lived in a country where Aboriginal history has not been included into the teaching of non Indigenous people. For people in this country I think that is a really fundamental problem. Because non Indigenous people have not identified Indigenous people. They have no place, they just don't have a place. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

Transformation can also be prompted at an organisational level. The simple act of employing Aboriginal staff can generate change as mentioned in chapter six. It is important for aid agencies to understand 'who you are' in relation to Aboriginal people: an aid agency *and* a non-Aboriginal organisation (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007). From this there are implications. One is that you cannot speak for, or on behalf of, Aboriginal Australians. Another is the importance of carrying those principles which guide Aboriginal activities through the rest of the agency, and not quarantining them in the Aboriginal program (Field notes: 20 Sept. 2007). This potentially begins the transformation of the agency.

Oxfam and the Fred Hollows Foundation are using Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs)⁵⁹ to change organisational practices so the agency as a whole is more consistent with the principles of their Aboriginal development activities. As the Fred Hollows Foundation (2008b: 4) RAP indicates, this requires a process of organisational reflection:

Our progress toward reconciliation should not be seen only or even primarily as the responsibility of Indigenous Program staff already working to close the gap, but as an organisation-wide responsibility. [All] areas of The Foundation's operations ... can do more to promote equality between Indigenous Australians and other Australians.

Ultimately, such processes require aid agencies to appreciate and address Aboriginal marginalisation within, or segregation from, the organisation.

The importance of valuing and strengthening Aboriginal worldviews and therefore identity is also a theme in interviews with participants and supported by aid agency documentation. World Vision's (2006b) integration of identity in activities in urban Armadale, WA, was noted in chapter six. Similarly, the Fred Hollows Foundation's (2007c) literacy work in the NT and western NSW involves culture. English language and practical literacy skills are accompanied by cultural literacy,

⁵⁹ Reconciliation Action Plans are promoted by Reconciliation Australia to turn good intentions into actions (see <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/reconciliation-action-plans>).

which connects people to culture and traditional language. The connection between culture, community development and health service delivery is clear in reflections on an Oxfam indigenous health study tour which included Canada and Alaska:

Seeing what is done [in indigenous health in North America] changed my thinking and upped the bar in terms of what we should be striving for. Places where community development and cultural strengthening was absolutely a component of every episode of care ... In Alaska it was most striking. Having your kids ears tested can be just that, or it can be done in a very different way, using community leaders, health promotion facilities, the role of elders ... (Participant A – Oxfam)

This participant also describes healing centres in Edmonton, Canada, which are internationally recognised for indigenous healing through culture. Healing processes include talking circles, counselling, history projects and mutual support groups. The participant observed that the experience of indigenous Canadians in the *residential schools system*⁶⁰ is highly relevant to the grief, loss and trauma issues of the Stolen Generations in Australia (Participant A – Oxfam).

Trust

Development activities are based on relationships between an aid agency and a 'community'. Relationships take time to establish. When relationships are between people with different worldviews, understanding is not automatic. Where the developer represents the coloniser and the beneficiaries represent the colonised, trust cannot be assumed. But it can build as relationships strengthen over time and understanding is demonstrated through actions in response to shared experiences.

There were a whole lot of issues and you go through these with *everyone* ... you are kind of a part of it ... A lot of it is about building that trust, capacity and the relationship between the two. (Participants C and D – World Vision)

'Trust is the key' headlines an Oxfam article about its Gulf Regional Health Service (Oxfam Australia 2008c). It indicates the importance of trust between the aid agency and community, supported through respect for culture. A community member is quoted: "Because Oxfam thinks about integrating our culture and Elders into their programs it makes it safer for people and they want to be involved (Oxfam Australia 2008c: 1). The article also identifies that a community will not automatically trust Aboriginal workers in aid agencies. An Aboriginal worker is

⁶⁰ The *Indian Residential Schools System* institutionalised children in government-funded, church-run boarding schools designed to assimilate indigenous children.

quoted: “It’s all about building trust and making sure that they feel confident in being able to trust me with a lot of their issues” (Oxfam Australia 2008c: 1).

Trust between organisations is demonstrated in the relationship between Oxfam and Yorgam (Perth, WA) an Aboriginal community-based organisation established by survivors of child sexual assault and family violence. Oxfam began supporting Yorgam with funding and skills development “when nobody else would ... A bit of faith, a bit of confidence” (Participant A – Oxfam).

For aid agencies trust involves risk. Trust involves letting go of control despite how uncomfortable that might be. One participant describes a situation of not knowing why something had not gone right, and the people they were working with not disclosing why. The participant noted that the situation is familiar to aid agencies in international work, and that it requires the aid agency to trust. The alternative, pushing the ‘need to know’, would have harmed the relationship and may have ended the program.

[W]hen we work together on projects, the way *we work together in the middle*, there is a whole *grey area where the two cultures just find it very hard to meet*. That crossing over area is a cross cultural situation that happens all over the world, where *you have to trust* something that you don’t know. NGOs are in a position where, because of the experience we have in other cultures, we can operate with this phenomenon. *We have a trust* with the people we are working with and the Aboriginal community, *they have a trust with us too*. I believe Government finds this difficult. They need to know. [emphasis added] (Participants C and D – World Vision)

The third space: escaping black and white thinking

Listening, meanings, time, flexibility, transformative experiences, identity and trust taken together help developers and beneficiaries find an in-between space or third space, not constrained by polarities.

We put a lot of work into trying to, from our perspective, understand the difference and where people are at between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society, and *how people have to operate in this middle area*, and what that meant about our engagement and how we engaged together as kind of a working body. [emphasis added] (Participants C and D – World Vision)

The need to escape polarities is also identified in development methodology:

You can either be a bleeding heart – or aggressive (‘it should be done like this!’). Or find some way of [dealing with] the complexity of the intercultural stuff, which is neither of those. (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation)

Complexity is increased when the beneficiaries also have polarised views:

The difficulty is finding a space where both of those things can work. In South Africa there is whole part of the country still in defence mode. Another part is about moving forward. Anything that is a problem is because 'a white person did it'. It is about trying *not to fit in that place*. [emphasis added] (Participant E – Fred Hollows Foundation)

Conclusion

This chapter explores some of the resources and learnings which international development can offer Aboriginal poverty reduction. There are clearly technical approaches and tools which have been transferred in the practice of aid agencies. There are more approaches which, for lack of resources, are yet to be explored.

Ways that aid agencies frame their work, notably the distinction between humanitarian relief of the symptoms of poverty and development for lasting change, are mirrored in Aboriginal contexts as the distinction between service delivery and capacity building. Are government policies designed to provide welfare now or to foster change for the future? Do they address the symptoms of poverty or the causes?

It is clear that the work is complex, and implementing principles such as partnerships is not straightforward. There is also a tension between some of the elements described as *what they do*, and the implementation processes of *how they do it*, particularly in terms of control. While increasing Aboriginal control of the development process was one of the main themes in the literature reviewed in chapters two and three, the participants' discussion suggests that these development processes are not necessarily within the control of either the developer or the beneficiary: they are organic and responsive to an external context from which Aboriginal Australians are marginalised, and an internal context dealing with social breakdown.

Because the participants were non-Aboriginal Australians working in non-Aboriginal agencies, there is a presumption in the discussion that development practice is a cross-cultural activity. However there is also a theme within the discussion that Aboriginal staff and consultants are critical intermediaries between two worldviews, and that issues of trust also extend to Aboriginal development practitioners.

In the next and final chapter (eight) I draw the main findings of the research together in a critical analysis, consider their implications, and provide suggestions for future research.

Chapter eight: Implications and ways forward

*“When we do not agree, perhaps it is because none of us see far enough.
People living on opposite sides of a mountain rarely see the land the same
way until they meet at the top”*

Navajo saying (cited in Barrera, Corso & Macpherson 2003).

Introduction

This thesis has explored the lessons and limitations of international development approaches for Aboriginal poverty reduction. In this final chapter I synthesise and reflect on the research findings. The research was exploratory, limited to a point in time and to the three agencies (World Vision, Oxfam and the Fred Hollows Foundation) therefore I draw implications rather than conclusions from the findings. I also recognise that indigenist perspectives may provide alternative insights to my own, and hope this thesis stimulates these. The chapter ends with suggestions for further research.

What I had hoped would be straightforward research turned out to be more complicated than I anticipated. I wanted to open the tool box of international development to see what it could offer Aboriginal development practitioners, and at the same time to establish some limits to prevent inappropriate transference from a Third World to a Fourth World context. I hoped the research would reveal some implications for government policy. It did this, but it also threw me into the *deep end of the pool*, as one participant described it, in terms of Australia’s black–white relations, worldviews and identities.

Competing worldviews and third space

The competing worldviews of Aboriginal and mainstream Australians have consistently emerged as a theme during the research. In Figure 8.1, I map the complexity and interconnections of competing worldviews. I identified competing worldviews in Australian attitudes in chapter one (Auspoll 2009) and again in relation to research ethics in chapter four (Foley 2003). I found competing worldviews led to marginalisation and exclusion (Spicker 2007), and to increasing indigenous poverty (Tauli-Corpuz 2005) in chapter two. I found competing

worldviews reflected in competing meanings of development (Young 1995) in chapter three.

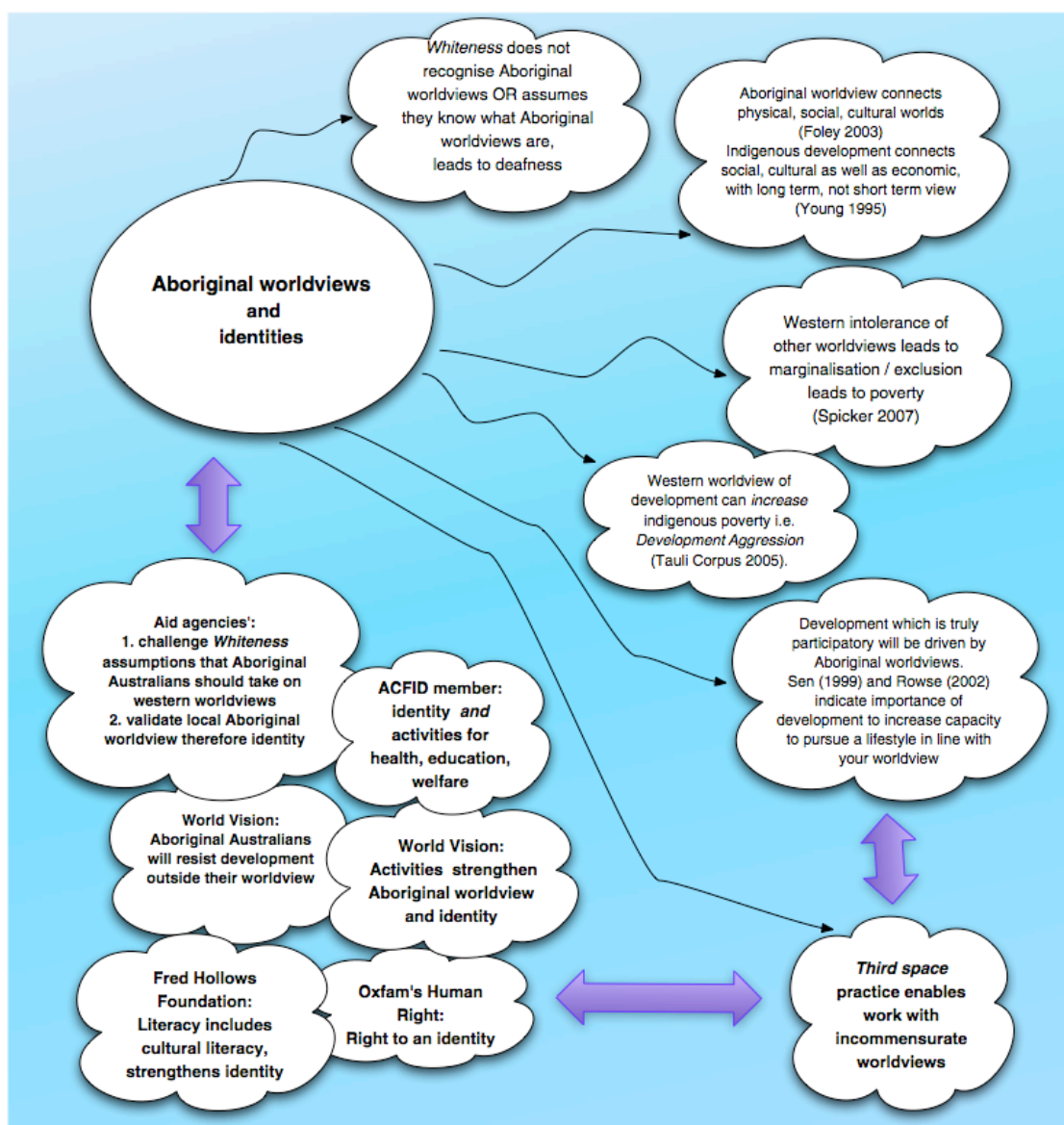


Figure 8.1: Map of the interconnections of competing worldviews

I discovered that aid agencies validate Aboriginal worldviews in their work and, by doing so, strengthen Aboriginal identities, independent of urban, rural or remote locality. Reciprocally, this recognition of Aboriginal worldviews has the potential to transform the identities of non-Aboriginal development practitioners, and of the aid agencies themselves. The implications of this for policies to address Aboriginal exclusion and marginalisation will be discussed later in this chapter.

The daily work of development practitioners involves balancing the demands of *what* they do, with *how* they do it, as discussed in chapter seven. *What* they do, or

activities, is derived from a Western worldview. Aid agencies experience the same control orientation (expressed as 'good management') as other Western organisations. *How* they do it, or implementation processes, is essentially about non-Aboriginal organisations getting out of their own worldview, not into an Aboriginal worldview, but into a neutral or third space which escapes the polarities of black and white thinking. Participants in this study described a number of processes or values which contribute to this: listening, meanings, time, flexibility, transformational experiences, identity and trust. Together, they enable partnership and power sharing between the agency and the beneficiaries of the activity.

Common approaches

Table 8.1 summarises the common approaches of the three agencies considered in this research. The agencies employ a human rights framework in both international and Aboriginal contexts. Their dominant approach is community development including advocacy. Community development is a bottom-up process which produces change which will endure beyond the duration of the activity. This can be seen as representing Korten's (1990) phases of NGOs which begin with relief, and move to community development, then advocacy, then people's movements.

Aid agencies recognise that relationships which underpin community development take time, and so commit to long-term engagement. They also recognise that community development means local ownership. They therefore respond to invitations, and then work in partnership. Agency documents and participants describe partnerships as more complex in practice than in theory. Partnerships require constant reflection and that the agencies ask themselves uncomfortable questions.

The dominant project management tool for international development activities, the logframe, has also been transferred to Aboriginal activities. The logframe process begins with a situation or context analysis which provides the basis for activity design. The logframe process also identifies the assumptions about how the activity will result in change. I will return to context analysis later in this chapter.

Table 8.1: Common approaches to international and Aboriginal contexts

	Oxfam	Fred Hollows Foundation	World Vision
Framework:			
Human rights framework	✓	✓	✓
Activities:			
Community development and capacity building at levels of: • community • organisation • industry (e.g. art industry, health sector)	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
Advocacy	✓	✓	✓
Principles of engagement:			
Long-term commitment	✓	✓	✓
By invitation	✓	✓	✓
In partnerships with Aboriginal communities	✓	✓	✓

A number of other tools developed for international contexts have been transferred by the aid agencies for use in Aboriginal development work. Some tools are attempts to proceduralise many of the implementation processes (listening, meanings, time, etc.) discussed in chapter seven and earlier in this chapter. The tools identified include participatory rural appraisal, Most Significant Change technique, and sustainable livelihoods frameworks.

Limitations to the transfer

The research identified a number of differences between Aboriginal and international contexts. These are summarised in Table 8.2. The Fourth World position of Aboriginal Australians, meaning marginalised and without autonomy in an Australian state which represents the colonisers who have not withdrawn, is significantly different to a Third World country which has won ‘independence’. In Aboriginal contexts, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, activities validate Aboriginal worldviews and strengthen Aboriginal identities. Aid agencies also play a demonstration role, by modelling effective relationships with Aboriginal Australians

in a segregated society (see chapter seven). In Aboriginal contexts, the developers represent the colonisers, they are ‘part of the context’.

Table 8.2: Differences between First/Fourth and Third World contexts

	Australia	Developing countries (Third World)
Competing worldviews & marginalisation (Fourth World)	Aboriginal way is not the dominant culture. All the structures operate within the mainstream culture, not Aboriginal culture.	People have the same cultural thinking as the dominant structures.
	Aid agencies have a demonstration role for mainstream. They build working relationships between Aboriginal communities and mainstream which demonstrate what is possible.	
Developer as coloniser	Aid agencies are part of the context. They represent colonisers in a (never quite post) colonial country.	Aid agency workers are foreigners (ex-pats) in an ‘independent’ political environment.
Impact of developed state (First World)	Aboriginal people have rights on paper, but are largely unable to exercise them.	People have fewer legal rights, but a greater role in the economy.
	Aid agencies do not work on physical infrastructure and emergency services. Demarcation with government responsibility.	Aid agencies work on physical infrastructure projects – education, health, water and sanitation etc.
	Entry points for aid agencies to work with an Aboriginal community are ad hoc. Rely on an intermediary.	Entry points for aid agencies often concern livelihoods and are readily available.
	Impact of the welfare state.	No welfare state or safety-net.
	Appearance that government funds are available, but in reality money is difficult to get.	

Differences which relate to the First World include an inverse relationship between rights on paper and right in effect, aid agencies demarcation with government, the limited potential impact on income, and the impact of the welfare state.

Implications for development practice

Throughout the research process I have reflected on my own experiences in Aboriginal development and the questions I asked myself when I worked briefly for an aid agency (see chapter one). I have found two basic concepts go some way to answering those questions and will inform my practice in the future. One is the principle of Do No Harm. The other is the significance of context analysis. Although I had an intuitive understanding of both concepts, I did not have a way to express them.

Do No Harm

The importance of the Do No Harm principle in conflict-sensitive contexts was discussed in chapter two. Throughout this thesis I have identified the Do No Harm principle as relevant to a number of situations. These include: needs-based planning as a narrative of disempowerment (in relation to asset-based community development); “a small spark of hope; dangerous in that hope denied adds to frustration” (in relation to change agents) (Rowley 1972: 54); that interventions may damage potential resilience (in relation to the NTER) (Oxfam Australia 2008a); that ineffective interventions have an opportunity cost of spending resources more effectively (in relation to the NTER) (Oxfam Australia 2008a); and that interventions may sustain rather than resolve crises (in relation to communities in crisis) (SGS 2007: x).

Only one participant described an example of implied harm in the case of shame caused to Aboriginal workers when promised and planned-for funding did not arrive within a relevant time period (Participants C and D – World Vision) (see chapter six).

World Vision International’s LEAP (program logic) identifies peace building as one of six cross-cutting themes relevant to all activities (WVDRT 2005: 13). LEAP requires that peace building includes a Do No Harm analysis to gauge potential

unintended impacts of activities (although during this research it was not identified in relation to World Vision's Aboriginal activities). LEAP's Do No Harm analysis identifies "things that bring people together (connectors) and things that push people apart (dividers)" (WVDRT 2005: 13). Questions for the analysis could include:

- What is the history of conflict and/or peace building?
 - Who has access to and/or control of resources?
 - Who is likely to benefit and/or be harmed by the programme/project?
- (WVDRT 2005: 13)

I believe there would be great value in future research which examines the experience of harm in Aboriginal development, and alternatives which Do No Harm. From my perspective, the benefits of such research would be beyond informing the practice of aid agencies and other NGOs, and the policies of government. It would also bring together the language of Do No Harm with narratives from Aboriginal contexts. I believe when disseminated, this could empower Aboriginal Australians to assert the right that planned activities and interventions Do No Harm.

Context analysis – whose context?

Context is a buzz word in the field of international development. "The first thing that is drummed into you in the international scene *is context, context, context*. What is the context in which you are working?" (Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation) (see chapter six).

Context analysis, also called environmental scanning, is the first step in activity design using the logframe approach. A rigorous context analysis, for example, would identify that the failed states approach was inappropriate for remote Aboriginal communities because they lack sovereignty (see chapter three).

The extent to which the aid agencies apply context analysis was not established during the research, however, for the Fourth World situation of Aboriginal Australians, context analysis begs the question, whose context? Is the context simply the Aboriginal situation, focusing on a local group, and the impact of government policies which are specific to Aboriginal Australians? Or does the

context to be analysed extend to universal policies which impact disproportionately on Aboriginal Australians, for example, the disincentives in the welfare system (see chapter three), and the withdrawal of services from small rural towns (see chapter six)? The same questions can be asked in gender analysis. Is the gendered context only about Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men in relation to each other? Or is the First World context with disincentives in the welfare system for low income families which disproportionately affect Aboriginal women (see chapter three) also relevant?

I believe that future research could explore an appropriate scope for context and gender analysis for Aboriginal activities. A scope which included the First World of the developers could minimise some of the unexplained inconsistencies between aid agencies' international and Aboriginal development work (discussed in chapter six).

Implications for government policy

The policy implications of the research were more profound than I had anticipated. They concern the fundamental distinction between relief and development, government control of funding to Aboriginal organisations, and strategies to address Aboriginal marginalisation and social exclusion.

Relief versus development

The Australian state tolerates poverty as a problem of inequity. Poverty affects a relatively small number of Australian people and its worst effects are tempered by the welfare state. The mass poverty of Third World countries, in contrast, is often a central social, economic and political concern.

One of the clear implications of the research concerns the transfer of the fundamental distinction between humanitarian relief and development, paralleled in Australia by the distinction between service delivery and capacity building. Relief and service delivery seek to alleviate the symptoms of poverty, but do not attempt change. Development and capacity building seek to reduce poverty by fostering lasting change which aims to address the causes of poverty. Aboriginal poverty, cast within the framework of Australia's welfare system, provides the equivalent of Third World humanitarian relief in the First World, and struggles to

move beyond that. The distinction provides a simple test to assess government policy. When the test is applied to disincentives in Australia's welfare system and to the NTER, both reflect humanitarian relief which, like aid agency food drops in famine or refugee camps in war, keep people alive but do nothing to bring about change. This is not to say that humanitarian relief is not valuable. It is and has continued to be an integral part of aid agencies' work. However, as I will discuss below, in the First World context of Australia, when combined with other government responses, it may well prevent change.

Government control as an inhibitor of Aboriginal civil society

In the international context aid agencies engage in community development to foster self-representative and mutual aid grassroots organisations which then initiate and sustain change. Collectively they are called civil society. World Vision's work in Wetenngerr (example 1 in Appendix D) provides an Australian example. However it is rare. More commonly aid agencies do not undertake community development to foster Aboriginal representative organisations because they already exist, in fact in a 'crowded landscape' to borrow Moran's (2008) phrase.

Rahman's (1993) description of the community development approach *Animation* distinguishes between organisations *dependent* on, or *supplemented* by, government funding (Rahman 1993: 159) as I discussed in chapter two. Most Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are dependent on government funding and their continued existence is therefore controlled by government. Since the 1970s Aboriginal community-controlled organisations were constrained by government conditionality but protected by the political significance of self-determination. This protection has been eroded by the policy influence of market supremacy. As government funding to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations has been withdrawn, increasing numbers of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have wound up.

Aboriginal representative organisations are therefore different to the *self-sustaining* civil society fostered by aid agencies' community development activities in international contexts. Does this mean that Australian governments should not fund Aboriginal community-controlled organisations? No. It means that government management has controlled Aboriginal community-controlled

organisations and by doing so has colonised the landscape. This has inhibited the endogenous development of a *self-sustaining* Aboriginal civil society.

Policy responses to marginalisation

The marginalisation of Aboriginal Australians is central to Aboriginal poverty, as I discussed in chapters two and three. Previous assimilation and contemporary mainstreaming policies aim to resolve this by coercing Aboriginal Australians to Western worldviews. In contrast, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, aid agencies validate Aboriginal worldviews and, by doing so, strengthen Aboriginal identities. This has implications for emerging government policies which promote ‘inclusion’ to address marginalisation. It indicates that policies need to be premised on mainstream Australian acceptance of Aboriginal worldviews, and require parallel processes which strengthen Aboriginal worldviews and therefore identities. As noted earlier in relation to the experience of development practitioners and aid agencies, this may require a reciprocal transformation of mainstream Australian worldviews and identities.

Suggestions for further research

I have indicated above that I see great value in future research which examines the experience of harm in Aboriginal development and alternatives which Do No Harm. Also that future research could explore an appropriate scope for context and gender analysis in the planning of Aboriginal activities.

Participants recognise that these are ‘early days’, and that their work has only begun to explore potential approaches for transfer and adaptation. Some participants suggested approaches they would like to see in practice. Micro-enterprise schemes (suggested by Participant F – Fred Hollows Foundation), for example, have already been successfully piloted (Opportunity International 2004) (see chapter three). Other approaches would benefit from future research. These include the community development approach of *Animation* (suggested in pers. comm. ACFID member), and processes for healing from trauma (Participant A – Oxfam).

The research generated other questions for me. Do faith-based (in this research Christian) organisations have unique advantages such as in working in the third space, perhaps derived from a values system which predates Western modernity, and disadvantages, perhaps association with previous harm perpetrated against Aboriginal Australians? What have they, as institutions, learnt? How does this influence their work?

In chapter one I identified some areas which were outside the scope of this study. Two related questions remain at the end of the study. One concerns the perspectives of the Aboriginal beneficiaries of the experience and impact of aid agency intervention. The other recognises that my exploration of the crossover has considered only half a story. The other half, the lessons from Aboriginal development for international development, remains an area for further research.

Postscript

I noted in chapter four that the research does not include Aboriginal perspectives on the analysis, and that seeking such perspectives requires time and flexibility outside the constraints of a thesis production process. I hope this thesis will stimulate such perspectives, and I hope I have opened a space for Aboriginal voices to be heard.

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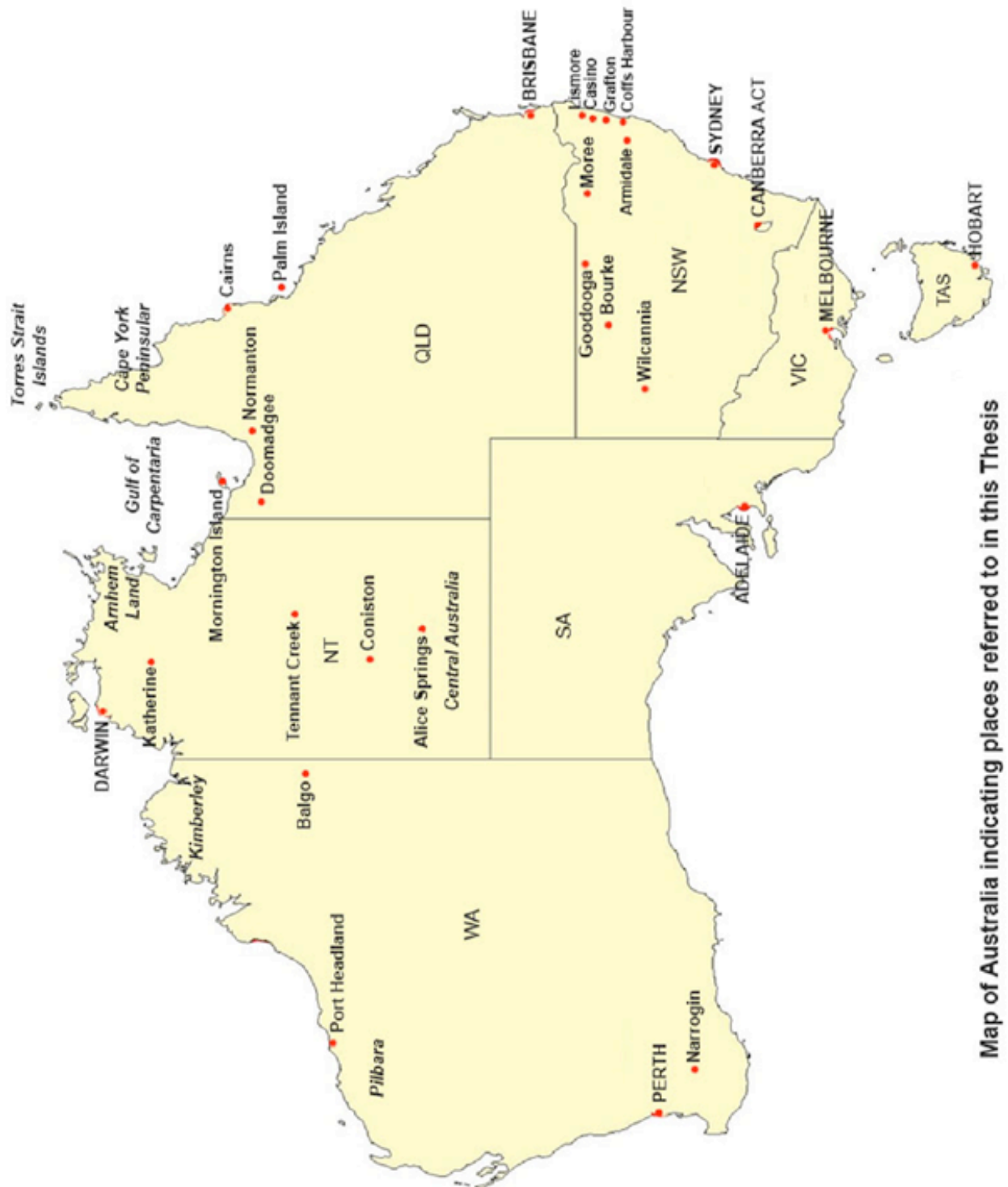
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Map of Australia indicating places referred to in this thesis



Map of Australia indicating places referred to in this Thesis

APPENDIX B:

Convergence of aid agencies work and government policy interest

	Aid agencies Aboriginal activities	Australian government policy interest
1960s	Save the Children Fund NSW sets up Aboriginal kindergartens	
1970s	Agencies starting Aboriginal activities: • Australian Freedom From Hunger Campaign • Community Aid Abroad • World Vision Australia • Caritas	
1980s	Save the Children Fund NSW hands over kindergartens to Aboriginal community-control	
1990s	Fred Hollows Foundation founded (1992)	ATSIC established as mechanism for self-determination (1990)
	Oxfam participates in working group for Dillon Review (1998)	Dillon Review of the Indigenous Communities of Doomadgee and Palm Island (1998–99)
2000s	Oxfam International investigation mission report: The Rights of Indigenous Australians (Gray and Ziauddin 2000)	ATSIC approaches Opportunity International to conduct Aboriginal micro-enterprise pilot (2000)
	ATSIC, Oxfam and Centre for Appropriate Technology jointly commission Parakrama Report (2000)	ATSIC, Oxfam and Centre for Appropriate Technology jointly commission Parakrama Report (2000)
	Oxfam decision to increase Aboriginal development work (2002)	ATSIC produces internal discussion paper on capacity development (2001)
	Fred Hollows Foundation and Oxfam provide submissions to Inquiry into Capacity Building and Service Delivery in Indigenous Communities (2002)	Inquiry into Capacity Building and Service Delivery in Indigenous Communities begins – House of Reps Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (2002)
	UNICEF Australia starts Aboriginal development work (approx. 2004)	ATSIC abolished, ending mechanism for self-determination (2005)
	Close the Gap campaign launched (2007)	
	ACFID Annual Congress features Aboriginal focus (2007)	Australian government announces Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) (2007)
	Oxfam provides submission to Northern Territory Emergency Response Review (2008)	

Information Sheet for Participants

Research title

Lessons from international development for poverty reduction in Aboriginal Australian contexts.

What is the research about?

The research will explore the principles, policies and practices applied by international development Non Government Organisations (NGOs) in work with Aboriginal Australian communities. It is intended to inform future Australian policies and practices to address Aboriginal poverty.

Who is doing the research?

The research is supervised by Dr Rebecca Spence, Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities, and Dr Bob Boughton, Senior Lecturer, School of Education. The research is conducted by Ellen Gallagher, and will be submitted for a Master of Professional Studies (Honours).

What does it involve?

Participants will be staff of international development Non Government Organisations who manage Aboriginal programs, policy and advocacy.

Interview participants will be asked to talk about their work, face to face. The interviews explore, but do not evaluate, your work. Interviews will be semi structured based on the Draft interview questions (over) and are expected to take one hour.

Meeting participants will be observed during meetings. Informal conversations may take place before, during breaks and after meetings. This will not increase the duration of the meetings.

Can I withdraw?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and – if you do participate – you can withdraw at any time.

Will I be recorded?

Interviews will be noted, or audio recorded if you consent. Meetings will be noted. Transcripts or notes will be provided to participants for verification. This information will be kept secure then destroyed after five years.

What happens to the information?

A written dissertation will result from the research. The research may also be submitted for further publication. Individual participants will not be named although they may be quoted, or their ideas discussed in the dissertation. Copies of the final dissertation will be provided to the organisations participating in the research.

What if I want more information?

When you have read this information, Ellen Gallagher will discuss it with you and answer any questions you have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Ellen Gallagher on 0431 130 996, or Dr Rebecca Spence (rspence1@une.edu.au) or Dr Bob Boughton (bob.boughton@une.edu.au) by email.

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No. HEO7/153, Valid to 03/10/2008.)

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Services
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351.
Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543
Email: Ethics@pobox.une.edu.au

Draft interview questions

1. What principles, policies and practices from international development do you use in your work with Aboriginal communities?
2. How is that the same and different from your organisation's work in developing countries?
3. What affects the transferability to Australian Aboriginal contexts?
4. How does locality play out within Australia? In what ways does urban, rural, and remote context make a difference?
5. Do you think there are implications or lessons from your work for future Australian policy and practice?

APPENDIX D: Examples of aid agency activities

Example 1

Aid agency:	World Vision Australia
Location:	Very remote community, Central Australia, NT
Context:	The Wetenngerr Aboriginal community resides on land excised from Epenarra Pastoral Lease 210 kms from Tennant Creek in Central Australia. It is a very remote community with a fluctuating population of 200–300 Aboriginal Australians. The relationship between World Vision and the Wetenngerr Aboriginal community began in 2003. They were introduced by the local Member of Parliament in response to the community exclusion from external (government) decision-making about the community because there was no externally recognised body representing the community (World Vision Australia 2006a, 2007c).
Activities:	One activity was to re-establish an externally recognised governance committee to represent the community. This included resolving the legal ambiguities of a dormant committee and working with the community to establish an externally recognised committee that was consistent with Wetenngerr community authority (World Vision Australia 2007c).

Example 2

Aid agency:	World Vision Australia
Location:	Birrung Gallery in Sydney, NSW Aboriginal artists in remote communities
Context:	Aboriginal artists in remote communities are vulnerable to exploitation and profiteering from art traders. The gallery provides fair trade, and the proceeds fund other World Vision Aboriginal activities.
Activities:	Birrung Gallery represented 300 individual artists and 30 Aboriginal art centres in 2008. In 2007 it made a submission to a senate inquiry into Aboriginal art and has been active in the development of a code of practice for industry fair trade (World Vision Australia 2008a: 41).

Example 3

Aid agency: World Vision Australia

Location: Outer suburb of Perth, WA

Context: Armadale is an outer suburb of Perth with a population of over 1,400 Aboriginal people, most under the age of fourteen years (ABS 2007: 45). The relationship between World Vision and Armadale Noongar Corporation began in 2004. They were introduced by ATSIC in response to young people's marginalisation from mainstream society and disconnection from Noongar culture, resulting in self-harming and anti-social behaviour.

Activities: A component of a social and cultural project is a youth circus.

The Armadale Noongar Circus is part of the joint program initiated by World Vision and the Armadale Noongar Corporation to promote well-being among Indigenous youth ... Around 90 Indigenous children have had a go at stilt walking, juggling, uni cycling and acrobatics ...

... the young people have achieved a level of competence and confidence to take part in public events, such as:

- The opening of Government House in Perth
- Fremantle Festival Parade ...

The circus is also a strong social tool for youth development. It brings young people a sense of identity, adventure, trust, imagination, and a diligent work ethic, all in the context of fun ...

... the performances are designed in a way that honours the Noongar culture, both traditional and contemporary. (World Vision Australia 2005b: 3)

Example 4

Aid agency: Oxfam Australia

Location: Perth-based, WA

Context: Yorgam Aboriginal Family Counselling Service is an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation which provides healing services for child sexual assault and family violence.

Aboriginal children are 7.6 times more likely to be sexually abused than other Australians; Aboriginal women are 45 times more likely to be victims of domestic violence and eight times more likely to be a victim of homicide. (WA Government, Putting the Picture Together report of inquiry 2002 cited in Oxfam Australia 2005: 13)

Activities: Oxfam funds Yorgam's community development workshops.

In the community development program, locals from towns and communities in the south of Western Australia attend workshops and learn about their human rights, discuss the impact of history and violence, participate in art therapy and make plans for how they will address abuse and violence in their communities. Training of local facilitators then allows communities to continue the empowerment and action.

By increasing the engagement of community members, Yorgam counsellors are providing a culturally appropriate and holistic service. By having totally Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal terms of reference and protocols, Yorgam is connecting with community members previously overlooked.

Following a workshop in one town south of Perth, a group of women took action with a housing department and demanded that overdue repairs be made, which resulted in freshly painted homes within three months. In another town, an unprecedented move came when a policeman attended a workshop, signalling a shift in attitudes between authority figures and Aboriginal youth which have largely been hostile. (Oxfam Australia 2005: 13)

Example 5

Aid agency: Oxfam Australia

Location: Gulf of Carpentaria, Far North Queensland

Context: Normanton is the largest town in the Gulf of Carpentaria in Far North Queensland. Aboriginal people represent at least 60% of the Normanton population of 1,099 (ABS 2007: 36). Large Aboriginal communities are also located at Mornington Island and Doomadgee.

Oxfam is contracted by the Australian government (Department of Health and Ageing) to run the Gulf Regional Health Service and intends⁶¹ to transition the service to Aboriginal community control. The service focuses on the Social Determinants of Health to improve health and well-being (Oxfam Australia 2008c: 1).

Activities: Oxfam employs two local Aboriginal women in Community Development Officer and Health Promotion Officer positions based in Normanton. Community development projects have been developed with local organisations for example the Family Place project:

Community members often have trouble telling family not to bring alcohol and other drugs into their homes. To address this problem, community members initiated the 'family place' project to make it easier for families to express their wishes. Families participating in the project attach a 'family place' sign to the front fence of their home, making it clear to visitors that alcohol and other drugs are not welcome. The families are supported by training and home visits and also have access to a community-based worker who links them in to other support services.

Supported by the Gulf Regional Health Service and government agencies, the project is significant because it empowers families to say 'no' and gain back respect in the hope that children will have a better future without alcohol in their family place. It is also a good example of how the Gulf Regional Health Service supports initiatives which strengthen the whole community. (Oxfam Australia n.d.f: online)

⁶¹ It appears the transition to Aboriginal control is a long-term intention. There is no reference to how or when this will happen in the Strategic Plan (2007b), the Reconciliation Plan (2007c) or policy on the Oxfam website.

Example 6

Aid agency:	Oxfam Australia
Location:	Aboriginal community-controlled health sector, NT
Context:	Aboriginal community-controlled health services provide primary health care services initiated and operated by the local Aboriginal communities. The future of these services was threatened by the 'lack of young leaders coming up the ranks' (Oxfam Australia n.d.g: 1).
Activities:	Oxfam Australia supported the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory to hold a second leadership workshop [in June 2007]. 40 young, emerging Indigenous leaders took part in the workshop which focussed on strengthening their leadership skills (Oxfam Australia n.d.g: 1).

Example 7

Aid agency:	Fred Hollows Foundation
Location:	Katherine region, NT and western NSW
Context:	Poor nutrition is one of the underlying causes of poor health, disease and chronic conditions. Aboriginal people in remote communities have limited access to fresh food (Fred Hollows Foundation 2007d: 4).
Activities:	The Foundation works in remote communities to improve nutrition and access to fresh food. Our focus is on providing secure access to affordable, healthy food and on teaching families about the importance of food choice and preparation. A Nutrition Strategy is being undertaken in the Katherine and Western New South Wales regions in collaboration with Aboriginal owned community stores and co-operatives, Women's Centres and Aboriginal Medical Services. Our initial step was to rejuvenate and restock the community stores, the only place to buy groceries within remote communities. Ownership of the stores has been returned to the community and the staff has completed training in store management and stock handling. New fridges were provided along with other refurbishments so that fresh, nutritious food can now be properly stored and promoted. We also work with smaller communities to establish sustainable food supply. (Fred Hollows Foundation n.d.c: online)

Example 8

Aid agency:	Fred Hollows Foundation
Location:	Central Australian Integrated Eye Health Program
Context:	Aboriginal Australians suffer from higher rates of eye problems than other Australians. In 2007 there were 300 patients waiting for eye surgery at Alice Springs Hospital, many of them Aboriginal people from remote communities (Fred Hollows Foundation 2007d: 4).
Activities:	The Central Australian Integrated Eye Health Program is a collaboration with local Aboriginal health organisations, the Eye Foundation, Australian Government, and the NT Government. It arranged eye surgeons to visit Alice Springs, and coordinated support and transport for people from remote communities to have eye surgery (Fred Hollows Foundation 2007d: 4).

Example 9

Aid agency:	Fred Hollows Foundation
Location:	NT and western NSW
Context:	Literacy is a social determinant of health. There is an enormous gap in the English literacy rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia. The gap is even wider for Indigenous people living in remote and isolated communities. (Fred Hollows Foundation 2007c: 2) The Fred Hollows Foundation (2007c: 1) has a three-way approach to literacy: • cultural literacy (connecting young people to culture and traditional language) • practical literacy (needed for everyday activities) • English literacy (reading, writing, speaking and listening).
Activities:	Two activities as part of the literacy strategy have been: • A traditional song project – recording and translating the songs of elders so that young people can learn more of their culture and language. • After-School-Hours Music Program – to engage young people in learning and encourage them to attend school or another form of education. (Fred Hollows Foundation 2007c: 1)
