Gender Equality Policies: Results for Social Change?

A comparative discourse analysis on gender equality from two ends of the “aid chain”

Miriam Bette
Abstract

The field of international development cooperation has experienced an increasing demand for result-driven management over the last decades. However, a clear consensus of the meaning of ‘results’ is often lacking in initiatives and projects for social change. As the field functions throughout myriads of contexts and cultures, the demand of results therefore brings upon issues of definitions and discourse, as well as underlying values. The goals and strategies set out to achieve certain results are influenced by assumptions that define the problem definition of the targeted issue. A hierarchy in international development, the so-called aid chain, is determined by who provides funding for cooperation projects. The flow of top-down funding is shown to be accompanied by a flow of top-down policies, that are further accompanied by underlying values, problem definitions and assumptions. This study inquires whether different notions, assumptions, and problem definitions on gender equality across cultures in the aid chain might disturb result-reporting in international projects. Departing from a postcolonial perspective, the content and discourse of the Swedish feminist foreign policy and steering documents from an Indigenous women’s organization in Guatemala are analysed and compared. Seeing policies and policy-making as a significant communicative tool and practice in the field, this study shows how results, goals, strategies, problem definition and assumptions correlate to each other in result-reporting in international development cooperation projects.

Keywords: international development cooperation, gender equality, policy analysis, Indigenous feminism, Swedish feminist foreign policy, discourse, result based management

Abbreviations

AGIMS Asociación Grupo Integral de Mujeres Sanjuaneras (English: Integral Group of Sanjuaneras Women Association)
CSO Civil Society Organization
IDC International Development Cooperation
RBM Result Based Management
NPM New Public Management
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
SFFP Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy
SRHR Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
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1. Introduction

As with most industries and sectors, the aid and international development field is influenced by global politics. It is not indifferent to, nor untouched by global economic and geopolitical interests. Development policy initiatives are by several scholars claimed to be bias to some knowledges and discourses, while silencing others (see e.g. Escobar 1995; Kapoor 2008). Therefore, it is a necessary reflexive practice to scrutinize policies that are communicating frameworks that drive and guide the work for social change and international development cooperation work. The motif is to explore whether these frameworks might contribute to the reproduction of the (global) structural inequalities i.e. generating the issues that were originally set out to alleviate in the first place. The statement that social problems are not themselves objective phenomena. Rather, they are social constructions involving assertions that certain conditions constitute problems that require public attention and ameliorative programs. (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004 p. 107 cited in Archibald, 2020, p.9).

is in this study important to remember as a point of departure.

In 2014, as the first country in the world, Sweden officially adopted a feminist foreign policy. As the country operates from this policy in all foreign affairs, this influences the frameworks and practices in Swedish international development cooperation (IDC). The work conducted in the IDC sector is commonly organised through programs and projects. The project planning cycle is the dominant organizational form of in international development (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013; Wallace et al, 2006). When building these programs and projects, actors need to tend to the policies of those who will provide them with funding. The program, or project, is thus not only shaped by the needs of the recipients or targeted social issue, it is also shaped to comply to funder requirements. These two perspectives might not always harmonize.

Some argue that the field of “international development and humanitarian action project management” and the “gender equality perspective” have fundamentally incompatible approaches (Brière & Auclair 2020). The incompatibility is argued in regard to that the positivist epistemology, with quantifiable factors along with linear, mechanical vision of causality, seen in the project management field is not applicable on complex social issues such as gender inequality. Other scholars highlight that due to the complexity of gender
politics and practices, problems arise when complex gender issues are oversimplified in development work (Lennie & Tacchi 2013, p. 131-132). Moreover, language often used in interventions for social change implies linear, sequential, direct logic and determinate causal links “are not well-suited to describe changes occurring in the social and ecological systems that international development targets” (Belcher & Palenbergs, 2018 p. 493-494). For example, increased empowerment and changes in attitudes, are considered difficult results to identify and measure (Brolin, 2017a, p 144-145; Eyben & Napier-Moore 2010).

The target of an intervention and its problem definition, related to the raison d’être for an intervention, in project planning and evaluation is rarely problematized (Archibald 2020). The way social issues, such as gender inequality, and the programs and projects intended to address them, are filled with underlying values, ideologies and forms of discursive power (Bacchi 1999; Bacchi & Eveline 2010). There exist a hierarchy in international development, a so-called aid chain (explained further in chapter 1.2), which is determined by who provides funding in cooperation projects and programs, and the flow of top-down funding is followed with accompanying flow of top-down policies. People and organizations at the receiving end of development cooperation need to comply to the requirements and policies of the funders in order to secure funding.

1.1 Working from and within the result agenda - historical, global and Swedish contexts

An instrumental, managerialist approach craving demonstration of tangible results, is a trend in international aid and development cooperation, driven by neoliberalist influence through the models of New Public Management (NPM) (Drechsler, 2005). NPM grew strong during the 1990s, reforming governance and management in the public sector and civil society, in symbiosis with a neoliberal understanding of state and economy (Drechsler 2005, p. 1). Implementation of business and market principles that previously been used in the private sector was introduced in public sector, such as Result Based Management (RBM), a strategy where all actions and activities in a project are focused to support the achievement of clearly defined and demonstrable results (Vähämäki 2017, p.12; Scott, 2021 p.120). These project management trends in IDC is often called the result agenda.
The global trend of NPM and its effects has been widely and strongly adopted in the Swedish context (e.g. Vähämäki, 2017; Eyben, 2013). Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) is the governmental agency responsible for the allocation of funding for international aid and development cooperation. The funding comes from Swedish tax revenue, aiming at 1% of the gross national income, making Sweden the third-largest donor country in proportion to the size of its economy. The total amount in 2020 was 1.89 billion SEK. During the centre-right government coalition 2006-2014, the result agenda was strongly promoted to manage issues related to transparency and accountability in the field of development co-operation (Brolin 2017b, 340:399). Therefore, along with the arguments of Brolin (2017a; 2017b), and Vähämäki (2017) the Swedish development aid mechanism is publicly funded, legitimacy is one explanatory reason for being closely monitored by the craving of result demonstration of international aid and development cooperation projects.

What Scott (2021) calls a ‘projectification’ of Swedish development aid has enabled work-methods that are more structured and effective, but also require more control, as in measurable outputs and results. The pressure on practitioners to report results may emphasize certain measurable outcomes, can in turn represent and favour certain discourses and values, and at the same time, risk the silencing of others (Scott 2021, p. 47). These trends have been seen to increased instrumentalization, bureaucratization and managerialism within the field (Scott, 2021; Vähämäki 2017). Projects that emphasize measurable outcomes tend to drive out projects that produce immeasurable ones and this logic is inserted in international and cross-cultural contexts. This shows that conceptual and discursive differences in diverse context and cultures might provide some overlying challenges when implementing international development cooperation projects.

The result-agenda has had an impact on both communicative and operative work in the field, with focus shifting from the value of processes and objectives to the value exclusively of results. RBM is based on the premise that development is linear and all results can be measured, provided that the right instruments and techniques are applied (Drechsler, 2005; Brolin, 2017a). The focus on measurements and results within big international development institutions is both reflected in, and reinforced with, the implementation of the Millennium Goals and the Agenda 2030. In these, we see a number of concrete goals that the world is to achieve, with elaborate numbers of sub-goals, targets and indicators, which has led to an
increase and enforcement of the fixation on accounting and administration of demonstrable results.

1.2 Hierarchy, discourse and power in international development cooperation

The turn towards result-based management with the NPM reform, has caused a shift in the language and discourse used in the public sector (Vähämäki 2017; Scott 2021). Further, Eyben (2013) states that the diffuse power of NPM has shaped the design and evaluation of development projects and programmes through a discourse of ‘results’ and ‘evidence’. Even when embracing the result agenda fully, depending on what contexts and cultures the different stakeholders of the IDC projects are located in, the results that are sought after might be defined and perceived differently. With this comes a perception of power relations, when imposing a certain ideology, values, or even management-strategies and discourse.

When discussing stakeholders and relations within the field of international development and aid cooperation, metaphors like the aid chain are commonly used. “The Aid Chain: Coercion and Commitment in Development NGOs” (Wallace et al, 2006) is a book that parallels the stakeholder relations in the field with the economic term of supply chains. The chain holds unequal power-relations, as organizations lower in the chains respond to conditions set by those higher up in the aid chain. These relations shapes structures, practices and methods used in organizations.

As seen in figure 1, some actors have the power, and the mandate, to institute policy frameworks which the actors involved have to relate to (Brolin 2017b, 342). To enhance eligibility for receiving development funding from Sweden, actors further down on the aid chain oblige to the ideas, ideology and discourse of the feminist foreign policy. The image is a simplified demonstration

Figure 1 This image is borrowed from Brolin (2017b, p. 342), to explain the flows of policies and funding in the Swedish so-called aid chain.
of the aid chain, as the chain often includes several additional ‘middlemen’, which could be
one or several mediatory civil society organizations, serving as link(s) between Sida and the
recipient development partner organizations. This is also the case in regard to the aid chain
studied in this paper, even though the only the “ends” of the aid chains are included in the
analysis. The recipient organization is presented in more detail in chapter 5.3.

With the prevalent result agenda and goal-achieving model as main methods of work,
attention should be directed at the understanding of the fundamentals behind the definition
and conceptualization of the problem that is aimed to address in an IDC project, for at least
two reasons. Firstly, in order not to reproduce colonial patterns, historically frequent in the
field of development by enforcing ideologies from the global north to other contexts and
cultures. Kirkhart (2010, p.405, cited in Archibald 2020, p. 9) reminds us to “pay particular
attention to how social problems are defined and by whom. Problem definition also relates to
how power is distributed”. Result-reporting requires a set goal to be fulfilled, which is
influenced by the problem definition which have to be culturally responsive. Secondly,
policy-prescribed solutions to pre-existing problems, such as gender inequality, can be
analyzed as constituting interpretations as well as representations of political issues or
“problems” (Bacchi 1999). That is, policies can be counterproductive in regard to social
change. As a communicative tool, policies have the ability to discursively re-produce social
norms. For example, Allwood (2013, p.50) claim that “policymaking processes are deeply
structurally gendered, resting on gendered assumptions and reproducing gender inequalities”. Further, as stated by Archibald (2020 p. 9) “a governmental program designed to improve the
economic position of single mothers may actually operationalize neoliberal, racist, patriarchal
paradigmatic assumptions that do symbolic and physical harm to the participants, even if
their incomes improve”. To understand the depth of how such counterproductivity might
come to realization, a notion on structural causes to the social issues are crucial.

Policies communicate frameworks for operation within, from and throughout the
international aid and development sector and therefore bear power to potential positive social
change. In order for policies to contribute to this, continuous critical scrutiny and reflexivity
of policies at the top of the aid-chain in regard to power relations are, according to this thesis,
necessary.
2. Objective of study

One core aspect observed with the shift towards RBM and the chase for measurable results in the field is that the focus on satisfying donors to comply to their stated goals and objectives might take over the bigger purpose. As the demands of results have increased, there are also some discursive issues to be solved. This entails the inter-cultural crux of the result agenda, and to the issues that arises and further will guide this thesis. That is, the mentioned inquiry what is a result really? According to whom? (Vähämäki 2017; Archibald 2020). What are the goals to be fulfilled and what practices are used for these? To understand that better, problem definitions and assumptions will be included in the forthcoming analysis. To better understand the power that operates through the aid chain and how varying values underpinning feminism through cultural contexts, the objective of this study is to compare the perception of a positive result in regard to gender equality, between donor country policy and recipient organization policy. To do so, what is going to be analysed are policy documents and their goals, strategies, problem representations and assumptions.

2.1 Research question

Policies from two ends of the aid-chain are analyzed in the search for insight on the discussed inquiries and challenges. To better understand what results international development cooperation in regard to gender equality are working towards, the goals and strategies to reach them are examined, and further their accompanying problem representation and assumptions.

Following specific questions will further guide the content of the paper and comparative analysis:

How can differences of goals, strategies, problem representation and assumptions presented in documents of...

... the Swedish feminist foreign policy, and

... a Guatemalan (grassroot) Indigenous feminist organization

... affect result reporting in international development cooperation projects?

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1 Discourse is in this study defined as in linguistics mirroring philosophical underpinnings, i.e. the language, concepts and categories employed to frame an issue (Bacchi 1999, p2)
2.2 ComDev relevance

Communication for Development (ComDev) is an interdisciplinary field, in where communication can include practices of both external and internal communication in IDC and social change. Institutional policies influence organizational practices and communication in the field. Organizational documents, such as strategies, project planning and templates for evaluation and demonstration of results, are forms of written communicative practices. Scott (2021) explains this in detail accordingly:

Templates are often used as central communication instruments between actors. For example, in chains of financing in which intermediaries and partner organizations are connected, application and reporting templates can be used to connect these distant worlds with each other and let intermediaries and partner organizations communicate through them. In this way, the template as an artifact can do the “job” of connecting different organizational worlds, without relying too much on humans steering the process of communication. (p. 205)

The power/knowledge relation is directly involved in policymaking and there is a need to pay attention to what voices and forces that are setting institutional development policies (Wilkins et al, 2014 p. 9; p. 246). Including aspects of culture in policy making and satisfactory development intervention is a main argument made by Clammer (2013). He claims that interventions and policy-making must be done at a humanizing level, with policy-making from the ground and based on global representation of local contexts.

3. Literature Review

In this section, a collection and summary of previous work of scholars presents an extensive body of insight and considerations related to the current academic debate in regard to the research questions. The subjects of the reviewed literature range from effects on the result agenda, gender equality and policy analysis in IDC, all valuable to take into account when further conducting the study.

Brière & Auclair (2020) argue that the integration of gender in international development intervention and projects is very complex, as the fields of project management and the gender
inequality perspective have completely different approaches. In the project management frameworks, “problems are addressed in a reductivist fashion, which fails to pay sufficient attention to contextual elements when defining a project” (Brière & Auclair 2020, p. 505). Further, equality policies are stated to have become increasingly separated from implementation. Disconnections have been observed between the objectives that organizations endorse and the measures taken to attain them, which complicates the attainment of results (Brière & Auclair 2020, p. 501-507).

There is no lack of scholars directing heavy critique on the effects of the result agenda in the international development field (see for e.g., Eyben 2013; Lennie & Tacchi, 2013; Shutt, 2016; Scott 2021). It is by Vähämäki (2017, p. 26) claimed that the reform towards NPM and the result agenda in the field has in practice induced “perverse effects” with “obsessive measurement disorders”. According to Shutt (2016), some scholars argue that the spread of NPM was a deliberate ideological (neoliberal) project to privatize public services and Drechsler (2005, p. 12) states that “the price paid for NPM reforms anywhere has been high”. The shift has led to a widespread priority of quantitative, short-term results before sustainable, long-term goals. These practices, decided by donors in the aid chain, contribute to the diminishing of both sense of responsibility and ownership (Brolin 2017a, p. 5) of an IDC project in a on partner organization lowest on the aid chain.

NGOs in the ‘global south’ have expressed difficulties with the reporting results, stating that the methods and frameworks are ill-suited to the complexity and dynamics of their lives (Eyben et al, 2015, p. 170-180). The authors stress that one of the main reasons is a cultural gap that was not taken into consideration in the procedures. Concluded was that different ways of communication, with a cultural sensitivity, needs to be understood in the development, monitoring and evaluation of such projects. Brolin (2017a; 2017b) shares the concern that there often is a lack of consensus as to what qualifies as a result.

A perspective provided by Eyben et al (2015) is the fact that sometimes, preventing deteriorations of a situation, or simply holding the line, are in some contexts a good result, and often overlooked within the result agenda. A core aspect with the result agenda according to Belcher & Palenberg (2018, p. 479) is that several concepts that are currently used when measuring outcomes and impacts “are ambiguous and lack the conceptual clarity and precision needed for understanding, planning, and evaluating the complex development
interventions, programs, and policies of our time”. Their analysis shows the use of language that implies linear, sequential, direct, and determinate causal links which are not well-suited to describe changes occurring in the social and ecological systems that international development targets. For example, increased empowerment and changes in attitudes, are considered difficult results to identify and measure (Brolin, 2017a, p 144-145). Further, the goal of women empowerment is a discursively disputed concept and objective. Eyben and Napier-Moore (2010, p. 295-298) claim that the trends in field has cause a shift in meaning of the word empowerment, from a perspective of social transformation to making women economic “effective wealth producers” meaning that gender equality therefore is to be seen as “smart economics”.

The belief that women’s business success is enough to overcome all other barriers to equality is at the heart of current discourse. Cornwall & Rivas (2015, p. 406). The results defined in the narrow, instrumentalist terms in for example the goals of Agenda 2030 regarding women, can according to Cornwall & Rivas (2015) be achieved without challenging in existing structural inequalities. They state that in international development policy and bureaucratic institutions, discourse on “gender equality” and “empowerment of women” has subjugated feminist activists to a dead-end, away from a broader based alliance of social change activists. The concepts have lost their power in the gender agenda and have been reduced to so-called “buzzwords”, applied broadly and generally with little coherence or meaning. Cornwall & Rivas (2015, 403) call for a re-framing current agenda for social change, that the current discourse in with dichotomies such as ‘men’ are equated with ‘power’; ‘women’ with ‘powerlessness’, in order to avoid effects of counterproductivity. The authors would rather see use of concepts such as accountability, inclusion, non-discrimination – as they argue these are less vague and better reflect underlying power relations. In regard to gender policies, Allwood (2013) has also showed that EU development policy shows a strong rhetorical commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation when, however implementation methods are left out.

Brolin (2017b) critically investigates Swedish development cooperation relationships with Uganda and Mozambique, examining the framing of the result agenda itself along the aid chain. Showing that the increased demands for results in has influenced relations between donors and partner countries, her study highlights how policies from the global North travel to the global South, and how these policies are reframed in this process. The possibility for
organizations lowest on the aid chain to formulate own objectives in projects are highlighted as difficult. She also notes that the Swedish government has become more involved in the formulation of results requirements, and its mandate to define development objectives has thereby increased.

Gottenhubers (2015) comparative analysis on how underlying worldviews are reflected in the United Nations Guiding Principles and Swedish Development Cooperation Policies, stating that even if policy documents are focused on the same issues, differences in framing, discourse and underlying values were found. This becomes problematic in the work of implementing the policies, whereas “actions taken to improve a certain problematic situation may risk becoming undermined due to conflicting ideals, practices, and worldviews of those trying to improve the situation” Checkland and Poulter 2010 in Gottenhuber 2015, p. 6) These arising discursive issues can bring us down to a rather philosophical point of departure, as the view of a good result and the ways to get there may differ throughout cultures.

4. Theoretical and conceptual framework

This section presents the theoretical and conceptual points of departure used for the analysis. Starting from a broad perspective, academic critical inquiry is briefly introduced, followed by a narrower perspective of postcolonial theory and Carol Bacchi’s approach to policy analysis as a function of the former.

4.1 Critical theory

This study will depart from a critical approach, meaning that reality cannot be captured through empirical studies and to uncover it one must engage in interpreting available
discourses (Jung, 2015). Critical theory is regarded as a school of thought and an ongoing academic debate, rather than a particular or definite theory, where structural, social inequalities are put in perspective, by analyzing in inter-human communication and relations.

Critical theory is a practice of ongoing discovery, a permanent challenge to uncover the political in the everyday, to examine why we believe the things we do, and to analyze what work our worldviews are doing in shoring up particular norms, hierarchies, and exclusions. (Jung, 2015, p. 190).

Further, theories of critical development geography are most relevant to my thesis, where the notion that unequal power relations between actors in the global South and in the global North are shaped by neoliberal ideologies (such as NPM) since the 1980s. International development cooperation and the used discourse describing the concept of development itself, as well as policies and intervention strategies, has no exception of being embedded in these ideologies.

Prevalent discourses are highly influenced by power relations and, roughly described, countries in the North determine discourses and set policy agendas for other countries, including countries in the South, reflecting historical, colonial power relations.

4.1.1 A postcolonial approach: discourses of development and gender

As a sub-theory of critical studies, postcolonial theory arose in the second half of the 20th century with the main objective to question the social aftermath of colonization and shift ontological and epistemological perspective from the colonizers to the colonized. Western expansion since the sixteenth century has implied the expansion of hegemonic forms of knowledge (Dulfano, 2017; Escobar, 1995). The unequal and discriminatory forms of power relations are relatively more implicit in postcolonial society and politics. Postcolonial theory therefore applies a critical approach to the dominant paradigms and ideologies characterized by the western societies and politics, where one way of being, thinking and knowing, is acknowledged as correct, dismissing others as wrong.
Postcolonial theory is often associated in academics with literary discourse analysis, which based on ideas of Foucault, that power, knowledge and discourse are concepts fundamentally interrelated.

This following scheme from Roth (2017), is a rough guide to the different dominant discourses and paradigms historically justifying global western colonialism. It serves to explicitly see discursive and social powers of colonialism as an omnipresent force of truth-claiming that reproduces reality and knowledge.

For this study, the gender perspective is incorporated upon these above-mentioned points of departure. The legitimacy of the Western knowledge system has had repercussions for Indigenous feminism, and elsewhere. A broader approach to gender equality work is essential and Dulfano (2017, 84) states that “the multicultural variants of the feminism of women of colour who are Native further disrupts disciplinary boundaries to the point of destabilizing and de-centring many accepted Western scholarly frames of reference.” Dulfano (2017) states that Indigenous feminism as a movement desires to align and equally weigh two core components of identity politics, “Indigeneity” and “Feminism”. It tackles social power hierarchies simultaneously as assumptions and presuppositions of Western development models. Therefore, it cannot be absorbed within the political identities of Indigenous movements or within feminist movements. It makes up an own category, as it does not fit into one disciplinary camp coming down right in the mid-line between struggling patriarchal traditions and Western development models and globalization. (Dulfano 2017; Hernández Castillo 2010). Parallel to their participation in the struggle for land, they reclaim Indigenous cosmovisions* and Indigenous epistemologies as spaces of resistance also for gender equality within the family and the community.

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* A collective of world-views, encapsulating the Indigenous holistic perspective on reality
This paper builds upon and further explores a concept that Mohanty (1988) refers to as ‘discursive colonialism’. A sensitivity for this is crucial in IDC projects and gender equality work. Mohanty (1988) was early to urge caution and attention towards the historical power of hegemonic discourses of Western epistemology in the field of feminism. She discusses how the Western view on “Third World Women” and its discourse has affected how women’s issues are perceived. The reconstruction of social issues due to dominant discourses has not only affected those who set agendas and policies, but also the people (women) who being discussed, which in turn has had a negative effect on feminist movement in the “Third World”. This discourse has been called disempowering, as women in different contexts should be able to define their own problems and struggles, instead of only appropriating the Western woman's idea of what oppression is. Therefore, as stated by Brière & Auclair (2020, p. 505), efforts and projects of international development work targeting gender inequality must involve political engagement and self-criticism of power structures.

4.1.1 Bacchi’s WPR – a critical approach to policy-making

Carol Bacchi’s theory and analytical approach called “What’s the problem represented to be” (WPR) is aimed as a new, reversed way to think about policy, which is in this paper interpreted as a discursive practice (Bacchi 1999). Policies and policy proposals contain implicit representations of what is considered to be the ‘problem’ (Bacchi 2012, 21). As underlying values, discourses and worldviews are reflected in policy practices (Gottenhuber 2015, p. 2). Bacchi’s view helps to uncover these in relation to how a policy problem is presented. Discursive truth-making through problem representation occurs in policy-making as well as planning and evaluation processes in IDC projects (Archibald 2020, p.14). Therefore, probing problem representation is crucial in regard to project management, to ensure culturally responsive and decolonizing approaches. (Archibald 2020, p. 9).

Every policy proposal contains within it an explicit or implicit diagnosis of the “problem,” (Bacchi 1999). The WPR approach focuses on representations and assumptions in policies, uncovering the discursive power that lies in the act of defining and formulate actions global issues such as gender inequality. Designed to facilitate critical interrogation of policies and programs, focusing on the social and value-laden ways in which problems are initially defined, six specific set of questions are presented as guidelines to enable the WPR analysis:
1. What’s the ‘problem’ (for example, of ‘problem gamblers’, ‘drug use/abuse’, ‘gender inequality’, ‘domestic violence’, ‘global warming’, ‘sexual harassment’, etc.) represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?

2. What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?

3. How has this representation of the “problem” come about?

4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?
   Can the problem” be thought about differently?

5. What effects are produced by this representation of the “problem?”

6. How/where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced?

(Bacchi 2012, p. 21)

Her approach is a form of operationalization of critical theory, and is also a well-established approach and tool within the field of policy studies and feminist research. Following example illustrates on how the WPR approach works in practice.

In many countries leadership training programs for women are offered as a means of increasing women’s representation in positions of influence or in higher-paying jobs. So, training programs, it is implied, will help to ‘solve’ the ‘problem’ of women’s under-representation. A WPR approach directs attention to the proposal of leadership training programs, asks how this proposal represents (or ‘creates’ or ‘imagines’) the ‘problem’ of women’s representation and raises questions about what this problem representation (how the ‘problem’ is represented) leaves unaddressed. Pursuing our example, representing the ‘problem’ to be women’s lack of training presumes that women need training because they are behind or out of touch in certain ways. Women, in other words, are constituted as the ‘problem’, silencing consideration of the social rules that determine the meaning of ‘success’ and of ‘successful’.(Bacchi & Eveline 2010, p. 114).

The training of women is in the case presented as a strategy recommended to improve women’s status and opportunities, the assumption is that their lack of training is the ‘problem’, responsible for ‘holding them back’ (Bacchi 2012, 21). The foundation and intent of the WPR approach is refrain from, or at least make noticeable, discursive reproduction of structural social issues by assumptions. Gendered assumptions may lead to reproducing gender inequalities (Allwood 2013), a form of emphasizing and thus ‘doing’ gender as a concept. For this, the WPR approach call for deeper analysis of the ‘commonsense’
understanding of problematisation as how something is put forward (or represented) as a 'problem’.” (Bacchi 2012). It makes the case that policies discursively have the power to create or produce ‘problems’ such as gender inequality.

5. Methodology

In this section I present and motivate the chosen methods for following analysis. Departing from a broader perspective of comparative analysis and critical policy analysis, then narrowing for more detailed methodological work. Further, I present the raw data, the structure of following analysis and conclude the chapter with some reflexive notes and considerations on the conducted study.

5.1 Critical policy analysis

The methodological design of the analysis departs from a critical paradigm, defined as inquiry and problematization of knowledge (Given, 2008 p.171-172), which includes postcolonial approaches. This enables the analyzing of policies as institutionalization of systems of knowledge and truths as communicative processes.

Both critical theory and Bacchís WPR are as much theoretical approaches as methodologies for academic research, which are used in an integrated manner in the analysis of this thesis. Also, along with Archibald (2020), the WPR approach can be used for critical interrogation of policy documents and equally well for other organizational documents such as program and project design, evolutions and strategies, to uncover underlying values in how problems are defined.

5.1.1 Operationalization of Bacchi’s WPR approach

As a form of critical policy analysis, Bacchi’s methodology supports objective of the study by shedding light on “the focus on interpretations or representations means a focus on discourse, defined here as the language, concepts and categories employed to frame an issue” (1999, p.2). Out of her six inquiries formulated to uncover problem representation (presented in chapter 4.2), number one, two and four will be of explicit methodological focus in
forthcoming analysis, however as they are all inter-linked as a coherent approach for inquiry, the rest of the six set will also be taken into (some) account.

1. **What’s the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy or policy proposal?**
2. **What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of the ‘problem’?**
3. How has this representation of the “problem” come about?
4. **What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the problem be thought about differently?**
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the “problem?”
6. How/where has this representation of the “problem” been produced, disseminated, and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted, and replaced? (Bacchi 2012, p. 21, my emphasis)

### 5.2 Empirical Data Collection

**Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy (SFFP)**

In 2014, Sweden became the first country in the world to publicly adopt an explicitly feminist foreign policy. The aim is to apply a systematic gender equality perspective throughout the whole foreign policy agenda, and ensuring women and girls rights is an obligation within the country’s international commitments and prerequisite to achieving Sweden’s broader foreign policy goals – peace, security and sustainable development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy documents</th>
<th>Original name</th>
<th>Translated name</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Code name in analysis*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sveriges feministiska utrikespolitik</td>
<td>Sweden's feminist foreign policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AGIMS - (Asociación Grupo Integral de Mujeres Sanjuaneras – “Integral Group of Sanjuaneras Women Association”)

AGIMS is an organization working to improve living situation for Indigenous women in in the municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. Constituting mostly of Mayan-Kaqchikel women, the association was initiated in 2001 by five women community leaders, and they now have around 500 women from 65 communities as members. They receive funding through a Swedish civil society organization, who in turn apply and receive from an umbrella/larger civil society organization, who in turn apply and receive funding from Sida, who receive funding from the Swedish government. Their vision\(^\text{a}\) is to be a solid and autonomous women's association that works for the rights of women, to enable participation in local politics, contribute to life without violence for the women, and be a platform for organization for the struggles of the Kaqchikel women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGIMS organizational documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan Estratégico 2018 – 2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Structure of the analysis

Approaching and working both inductively and deductively with the documents, a thematic analysis was formed. Inductive reasoning departs from empirical observations to develop generalizations, hypotheses and/or theories, applicable in other contexts. Deductive reasoning instead departs from a hypothesis or existing theory, then explore empirical observations and test if the hypothesis or existing theory works (Given, 2008 p. 430). With this method, after reading theoretical and conceptual literature, together with the objective to come closer to what and how a result is framed in the two ends of the aid chain, four themes where distinguished as focus points for deeper inquiry. The WPR approach has inspired and guided

\(^{a}\) For further information see: [https://agims.org/](https://agims.org/)
the thematical analysis. These following four themes are examined, and here follows with my definitions of the concepts (based on subjective interpretations of hitherto body of literature).

**Goals** – Objectives of desired and envisioned results of the future, often quantifiable and measurable.

**Strategies** – Plans and practices determined and aimed at attaining goals.

**Problem Representation** – Definitions and framing of a situation constituting a problem in society, a form of diagnosis of a problematic issue or situation.

**Assumptions** – Taking something for granted, something that is perceived as common-sense, something that is framed as truth or certain. Assumptions are in this case crucial for uncovering values, discourses and worldviews.

5.4 Considerations, reflections and limitations

My initial intent was to do a policy analysis in three steps on the aid chain, including also policy documents from a small Swedish civil society organization (CSO), who have an intermediary role in the aid chain. They are a three-staff large organization, working with in programs and projects with four different countries in Latin America. They apply for funding from a larger CSO, who in turn apply for funding at Sida. The analysis on their documents was conducted; however, very few distinctive discursive findings were made between those and the ones of the SFFP, therefore they are not included in the comparative analysis of the study. This is due to the realization that the policies, strategies and operational documents of the CSO were heavily based on the framework of the Swedish feminist foreign policies, also with respect to the scope of the thesis. However, this realization is worth to include in the paper, knowing that goals and discourses adapt to those funding is applied from. Another important aspect, that didn’t make the cut in the final version of this study, is the concept of intersectionality. The reason is solely that the scope of the thesis work did not allow for the thorough conceptual presentation and inclusion in analysis it deserves as a complex approach, it could arguably make up for a separate research inquiry.

My position as an intern at above-mentioned Swedish CSO, has given me both inspiration and access to empirical data for the study. A consideration when conducting and reading the analysis of the study is the fact the compared documents work on different levels of society. Therefore, the SFFP as an institutionalized political policy and the grassroots organization
documents naturally have different content and discourses. Another consideration is that the documents have been written in three different languages, where I have done the translations myself. However, I am rather confident regarding my competence with translating between the three languages, as this is an endeavor that I tend to professionally both currently and previously.
6. Findings

In this chapter, the empirical data collected through methodological approaches mentioned in chapter 5 are thematically presented. The two sections of this chapter contain brief introductions of the analyzed documents, followed by tables where findings of the four categories (goals, strategies, problem representation and assumptions) are categorized and presented. The findings will be further analyzed in detail later in chapter 7.

6.1 The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy

The Swedish feminist foreign policy is stated to be an agenda for change and results to strengthen the rights, representation and resources of all women and girls (S:1, p 4). These three Rs constitute the core of the policy and the approach that guides the action plan for Swedish foreign policy (S:2, p.3).

In the SFFP documents, six “focus areas”…
1. Full enjoyment of human rights
2. Freedom from physical, psychological and sexual violence
3. Participation in preventing and resolving conflicts, and post-conflict peacebuilding
4. Political participation and influence in all areas of society
5. Economic rights and empowerment
6. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

... three “policy areas” …
1. Foreign and security policy
2. International development cooperation and humanitarian aid
3. Trade and promotion including sustainable business

… and six “tools” …
1. Analysis and knowledge.
2. Agency
3. Alliances, platforms and networks
4. International oversight and monitoring
5. Communication and public diplomacy
6. Consular work.

are presented in both documents.
With application of chosen theoretical and methodological approaches, this following table is a collection of excerpts of the Swedish feminist foreign policy goals and practices (documents S:1 and S:2), condensed and interpreted to belong to the four selected categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Strengthened global and regional normative work for gender equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The gender perspective must become a natural part of international standardization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Feminist foreign policy will continue to develop and achieve results that make a difference for people all over the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sweden shall continue to be at the forefront. In 2021, we will push for gender equality issues /.../</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Foreign Service shall further develop its result management in a way that strengthens planning, governance, resource allocation and results of the work with the policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Equal opportunities, rights and conditions of all human beings to decide, without coercion, violence or discrimination, over their own bodies, sexuality and reproduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase and promote women’s participation and influence in at all levels in peace processes (preventing and resolving conflicts, disarmament, post-conflict peacebuilding)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase the number of gender equality experts and for their placement at higher levels within the [UN] system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strengthen women’s and girls’ economic equality, empowerment and influence and receive equal pay for equal work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Make visible and strengthen women as economic actors
- Unpaid housework and care must be shared equally between women and men

**STRATEGIES**

- Sweden will continue to work for increased resources in all contexts in gender equality within international development cooperation
- Gender mainstreaming
- Sweden is demanding that the outcomes frameworks of international environmental and climate funds include indicators relevant to gender equality
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continuously review its governing documents to ensure that management and monitoring processes are in line with feminist foreign policy
- The feminist foreign policy aims to bring about change, this requires strategic communication and public diplomacy that reach new target groups and can contribute to normative impact
- The Foreign Service’s strategies shall with multilateral actors emphasize and follow up gender equality work with a focus on the work leading to concrete results
- An active effort to encourage and monitor commitments is essential to advancing global gender equality work
- Important parts of the work is to coordinate demands and messages with like-minded countries and donors, emphasizing countries' responsibilities to the Beijing Platform for Action* and Agenda 2030*, among others
- Contribute to support centers and sheltered housing for victimized women
PROBLEM DEFINITIONS

- Sweden’s feminist foreign policy is based on the conviction that sustainable peace, security and development can never been achieved if half the world’s population is excluded.


- Gender equality is a low priority from the global perspective for the allocation of resources within international development cooperation. [Only four percent of all global development assistance is allocated specifically to gender equality.]

- All forms of violence against women and girls affect both the individual and society at large and are a serious barrier to gender equality and development.

- SRHR have direct bearing on everything from level of education to economics.

- Women are almost entirely absent from most formal peace talks and decision-making in peace processes, which has consequences for the drafting and implementation of peace treaties.

- Women leaders, politicians, journalists and defenders of human rights are often doubly exposed in that they challenge both hierarchies of power and gender stereotypes.

- Women are in paid employment to a lesser extent than men and often in low-paid jobs and under poor working conditions.

- To a greater extent than men, women also often leave paid work to care for older relatives or look after children and grandchildren.

- Women not reaching their full economic potential also has significant negative impacts on the global economy.

- Their control over their own bodies, sexuality and reproduction is also critical to economic empowerment.
- Fewer woman-owned companies in developing countries participate in the formal economy

**ASSUMPTIONS**

- It is also clear that developments in the area of gender equality have had direct bearing on Sweden’s strong economic growth

- Greater gender equality contributes to more sustainable development and poverty reduction – a well-established connection

- Violence is the most extreme form of oppression

- Sweden is regularly placed at the top when the countries of the world are ranked on gender equality. This is evidence that Sweden's gender equality policy has been successful in many ways

- Societies in which women are empowered, active participants in politics, economics, culture and society also tend to be less inclined to violence, more democratic and more respectful of human rights

- Sweden’s proactive approach to promote gender equality has contributed to concrete results in the form of new gender equality policies, strategies and action plans

- Underlying causes of women’s under-representation in political processes and bodies, such as the main responsibility for unpaid housework and caring that is by tradition often put on women and girls

- Greater participation of women and girls in all aspects of peace processes contributes to sustainable peace

- It is important to address the underlying causes of women’s under-representation in political processes and bodies, such as the main responsibility for unpaid housework and caring that is by tradition often put on women and girls

- Women not reaching their full economic potential also has significant
negative impacts on the global economy

- Girls’ rights to an education are a prerequisite for achieving economic empowerment and development

- Important that women and men have equal opportunity to combine family life and gainful employment

- Effective labour market relationships and decent jobs contribute to greater equity and gender equality

- The work with resources is aimed at ensuring that resources are distributed in such a way that gender equality is achieved

6.2 AGIMS

The strategic plan of AGIMS (G:1), is stated to be a “tool that designs the path that the organization aim to take”, along with operational planning and political structure. In the strategy document from AGIMS, there are six listed issues to target, being:

1. Organizational empowerment and strengthening
2. Violence against women
3. Territorial conflicts
4. Political participation
5. Sexual and reproductive health and rights
6. Poverty and lack of employment

The second analysed document is an annual report (G:2), where the performed activities connected to each focus areas are presented narratively, but for the most part the activities are presented mainly through photos. Observed while conducting analysis was that the format, style and layout differ quite substantially between the documents of the SFFP and the organizational documents from AGIMS. The annual report and policy/strategy from AGIMS includes poems and lot of visual materials, such as photos and illustrations.
With application of chosen theoretical and methodological approaches, this following table is a collection of excerpts of the organizational documents of AGIMS (documents G:1 and G:2), condensed and interpreted to belong to the four selected categories.

**Table G (AGIMS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Build a just and equitable country, with greater opportunities and a dignified life for all women, especially of the Indigenous women of the municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Respect for the voices of Mayan women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recovery and defense of our body-earth territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strengthen leadership and organizational spaces for women in the communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strengthen the organization’s programmatic, managerial and administrative aspects and develop work systems (planning, monitoring and evaluation system)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Improved quality of care and access to justice for surviving women in the municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Women-survivors of violence overcome victimization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increase the political participation of Indigenous women in Guatemalan society to enforce their individual and collective rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increased awareness and access to information and support on sexual and reproductive rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contribute to the creation of economic alternatives for women and improving their economic autonomy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Increased knowledge and experiences of women producers with organic and sustainable techniques.

**STRATEGIES**

- The deconstruction of inequalities, the defence of Mayan women and the defence of Mother Nature is flag of struggle against authoritarian, racist and exclusive governments

- Alliances with civil society organizations

- Training and strengthening of women’s groups organizational skills.

- Political training as a strategy for the empowerment of women, both young and old.

- Prevention and care actions and activities for survivors of violence

- Provide legal advice and legal support to Indigenous women survivors of violence

- Creating spaces for emotional recovery with psychological clinical care

- Advocacy actions with key justice operators/actors

- Working with men and new masculinities

- Women of AGIMS aim to strengthens their Indigenous identity and their relationship with Mother Earth, as a tool for empowerment

- Organizing demonstrations and press conferences

- Information awareness-raising activity, such as social theatre

- Seek out allies and dialogue of women with religious and ancestral leaders on women’s rights

- Campaigns and educational meetings with families on sexual rights
and reproductive rights

- Marketing of products of women farmers markets and building family and communal orchards to improve their economic autonomy

PROBLEM DEFINITIONS

- Today, Indigenous women continue to report major violations of their human rights, without this phenomenon being visible in the Guatemalan society, which reaffirms the causes of marginalization, racism and multiple discrimination of which they are victims

- There are few organizational spaces for women in the municipality

- Domestic violence and violence caused by racism and ethnic discrimination are main issues lived by Indigenous women

- Most Indigenous women lack adequate support and access to justice within their own justice systems

- Arrival of mining company in the territory has caused increase of violence in general, with the women being main victims of (direct and indirect) violence generated by the company

- In Guatemala, ethnic discrimination and territorial exclusion are added to and combined with gender discrimination

- One of the most serious problems faced by Indigenous and rural women in the country is the limited access to sexual and reproductive health care

- Thousands of women die due to causes related to sexual and reproductive health

- The lack of employment conditions the women to dedicate themselves to informal trade work
ASSUMPTIONS

- It is a struggle that goes through our bodies as women, for our identities and for the rescue of the political historical memory of our ancestors.

- The Mayan worldview, a system of principles and values that allows us to understand that "everything is interrelated", from the spiritual to the physical-biological, conforming the eternal unity between humanity and nature.

- Spaces for emotional recovery allow women to go from victims to survivors of violence.

- With the arrival of the mining company, levels of violence have risen, from the patriarchal culture that is promoted in these types of companies.

- For the Kaqchikel people, the territory is something sacred and not a source of resource extraction for commercial or economic purposes.

- The lack of representation of Indigenous women has constituted a huge obstacle to their needs and rights, leading to neglect of Indigenous issues in national and international agendas.
7. Analysis

In this section, the goals, strategies, problem presentation and assumptions from the opposing parts of the aid chain is analyzed with a critical and postcolonial approach, with a focus on used discourse. The chapter includes a threefold use of the analyzed documents: Specific, value-laden words have been counted; some quotes are extracted and cited directly; and the findings from previous chapter, are all presented through relevant theoretical and conceptual lenses. The subjects are critically engaged with and examined in contrast to each other.

With the knowledge and insights drawn from the literature review (chapter 3) and theoretical frameworks (chapter 4), the thesis is based upon that differing values, or even discourse, between those in the aid chain who provide funding and those who receive funding could complicate international development cooperation. As stated by (Gottenhuber 2015), it is central to keep that conflicting ideals and worldviews risk to weaken actions taken to improve a certain problematic situation. The overall objective is to problematize possible requirements of (quantifiable) result reporting in a potential IDC for gender equality with these two entities.

When analyzing these four concepts of the documents (goals, strategies, problem definition and assumptions) it is with the understanding that they all correlate to each other. The specific correlation detected is that assumptions affect problem representation, which in turn influence the goal setting and thus also the strategies and practices done in the field \((Assumption > Problem Representation > Goal > Strategy)\). However, as they work in such correlation, it is difficult to analyze them separately. The following sections are all illustrations and contributions answering the overall research questions of the thesis, that is on how the differences in the examined documents could affect result reporting in IDC projects.

7.1 Assumptions

Assumptions with a postcolonial approach

In the SFFP documents, there is a frequent use of the term ‘developing countries’ (mentioned 8 times S:1 and 1 time in S:2). Using such terms, shows a lack of sensitivity towards
postcolonial perspective in the composition of the Swedish policy documents. The discursive act of positioning another country, or individual, as ‘underdeveloped’ is a mechanism of othering, which in turn contribute to colonial discourses (seen in figure 3, Julia Roth, 2017), a mechanism of positioning some countries below, or behind, others. Replacing ‘developing countries’ with the phrase ‘global south’ would demonstrate an acknowledgement of debates on postcolonial discourse and power relations in the development field. Thus, the concept of discursive colonialism (Mohanty 1988) in regard to the SFFP is noticeable. To some extent, colonial, or even imperialistic, rhetoric’s can also be perceived in the goal that “Sweden shall continue to be at the forefront” (Table S, Goals) and the strategies that “Sweden calls upon all states to fully implement their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all, without discrimination” as well as the need for “coordinate demands and messages with like-minded countries and donors” (Table S Strategies, my emphasis).

The concept ‘like-minded countries’ (mentioned 8 times in S:1 & S:2) carry similar suggestive connotations as ‘developing countries’, raising questions on how these would be defined in more detail. Considering that the documents constitute an official foreign policy, aimed to position a country politically in global context, its rhetoric may be seen as less problematic. However, when interpreted and operationalized for international development cooperation aimed at social change, it may contribute, in line with the arguments of Bacchi (1999; 2012), that policy-making strengthen those social structures that hamper the road towards solving the issue. When talking about helping or assisting ‘underdeveloped countries’ with the gender equality issues and positioning Sweden in the forefront of such politics and ideology, it might portray ideas of gender equality being achievable only, or at least better, in certain contexts, that is, in developed countries.

In regard to the Guatemalan context, the coexistence and correlation of “‘Indigeneity” and “Feminism” is constant in the analysed documents. Social power hierarchies are tackled simultaneously, as patriarchal traditions are viewed as interrelated to Western development models (Dulfano 2017; Hernández Castillo 2010). Description of countries as developed or underdeveloped are not used in the documents from AGIMS. Neither is climate/climate change, which in the Swedish documents are mentioned (29 times in S:1 and 13 times in S:2). However, this should not be interpreted as a neglect by the AGIMS regarding the subject matter. On the contrary, their view is rather inclined to the perception that the path and goals to achieve gender equality inseparable from the defence of mother nature (Table G, Strategy).
Their relationship to mother nature and Indigenous identity is itself explicitly seen as an essential tool to reach the set goals (Table G, Strategy).

The documents guiding the work of AGIMS include notions of their Indigenous cosmovision, as a system of principles and values that allows us to understand that "everything is interrelated" (G, Assumption). A main goal of the organization is for the women to reclaim their ‘body-earth’ (original: cuerpo-tierra) (Table G, Goals). Using this concept, the line between the body and its surrounding land/nature is blurred. This represents their unanimous struggle to reclaim their physical, human body as well as their lands. The physical, human body pertains to them as much as the nature and territory they live on and exist in. Their struggles as women go “through their bodies” with a political historical memory of colonialization of their territories. (Table G, Assumptions). Violating one is violating the other, as they are interconnected. I dare to argue that this concept and ‘way of knowing’ (epistemology) is rather unknown to the western ‘knowledge systems’ and policy-making.

A perspective of power is included in the SFFP addressed, in how women can be “doubly exposed”, as they, only in some specific positions (leaders, politicians, journalists and defenders of human rights), challenge both hierarchies of power and gender stereotypes. (Table S, Problem representation). However, the approach seen in the organizational documents of AGIMS show a more holistic view and approach to some of the issues. Revisiting figure 2 in chapter 4, the concept of worldviews is more viable, affirming the idea that underlying worldviews are reflected in policy practices (Gottenhuber 2015). To demonstrate how this could cause problems, imagine following scenario: in an IDC project, a requirement from Swedish funders (complying to the SFP) is to mainstream issues of gender in the work on climate change. This is expressed in the requirement of formulation of specific indicators and demonstration of quantifiable results, where such processes and actions are done. This might be perceived as irrational, abundant or very difficult for organizations at the bottom on the aid chain, who carries above-mentioned worldviews. However, in order to get funding, they would have to comply. In such potential projects, a lack of cultural sensitivity therefore, again, hampers the process that Archibald (2020) calls decolonizing approaches and practices in the field.
Assumptions - ‘Doing’ gender

In the problem representation (Table S) it is stated that women are almost entirely absent from most formal peace talks and decision-making in peace processes and that this in turn has consequences for the drafting and implementation of peace treaties. On this basis, a goal is presented to promote women’s participation (Table S, Goals). This comes with the assumption that greater participation of women in all aspects of peace processes would contribute to sustainable peace (Table S, Assumptions). Seeing policymaking as a discursive truth-making processes (Archibald, 2020; Bacchi, 1999), this approach of the woman as more capable and apt to resolve conflict, is as much a contribution to a solution (to gender inequality) as well as reproducing stereotypical gendered discourse (Bacchi & Eveline 2010; Allwood 2013). Similar analysis is drawn from the assumption (Table S, Assumptions) that “unpaid housework and caring” is an underlying cause of women’s under-representation in political processes. Also the statement that women often take special responsibility for homeschooling and that women are in paid employment to a lesser extent than men (Table S, Problem representation), together with the goal that “unpaid housework and care must be shared equally between women and men” (Table S, Goals). Using the reasoning of Bacchi & Eveline (2010, p. 114) women and their behavior are here represented as the problem, silencing consideration of the social rules that determine the meaning of ‘successful’. What needs to be problematized is how these gendered roles inherently have a lower economic and social status in our society.

7.2 Problem representation

General notes on discourse

When analyzing the SFFP documents, the lack of comments on concept ‘discourse’ itself was quickly noted. The role of discursive practices and power relations in work aimed at gender inequality are by several scholars seen as very important (Allwood, 2013; Cornwall & Rivas, 2015; Eyben & Napier-Moore 2010; Mohanty, 1988). Discourse as a concept or practice is mentioned only once in SFFP. It talks about disproportionate impact on girls and women of the detonation and testing of nuclear weapons and states that “the prevailing discourse can be analyzed from a gender perspective” (S:1, p 20). Not including the importance of discourse or
discursive practices in general in the SFFP is a form of silence, answering to Bacchi’s inquiries in her question number 4, that is - what is left unproblematic, where are the silences and can the problem be thought about differently? (Bacchi, 2012). Including the concept of discourse in a problem representation would be an acknowledgement of the important role of discourse and power relations in the work for positive social change and gender equality in IDC. Acknowledging dominant discourses and their effects could further contribute to a deconstruction of colonial practices (Archibald 2020) within the field. However, a notion of the importance of communication is acknowledged, by stating that “in order to bring about change” in regard to gender equality, “strategic communication is required” (Table S, Strategies).

**Problem representation – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)**

The assumption that “violence is the most extreme form of oppression” (Table S, Assumptions) could potentially be contextually, discursively nuanced. For example, most extreme form of oppression can by some be defined as torture, slavery, genocide, murder. SRHR goals in the SFFP include the “strengthening accountability and combat impunity for violence against women and girls” (Table S, Goals) which is underpinned with problem representation pointing at a structural societal issue. Also related to SRHR in the SFFP is the goal of “equal opportunities, rights and conditions of all human beings to decide, without coercion, violence or discrimination, over their own bodies, sexuality and reproduction” in where silences of non-binary gender issue are addressed by avoiding the use of woman/man terminology with focus on human rights in general, which according to (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015) is a better, inclusive and more effective discursive way forward. However, there is a contextual discrepancy in the problem statements regarding SRHR. In the SFFP it is acknowledged that “SRHR have direct bearing on everything from level of education to economics” (Table S, Problem representation) however in the problem representation of AGIMS (Table G) the issue is deepened as “thousands of women die due to causes related to sexual and reproductive health”.

37
Economic benefits of gender equality

Words related to economy (economic, economically etc.) are mentioned 92 times in the Swedish documents (55 times in S:1 and 37 times in S:2) and 16 times in the documents from AGIMS (12 in G:1 and 4 times in G:2). The economic focus and market-driven values also shine through several of the goals and strategies of the SFFP. Gender equality is presented as a smart economic investment for sustainable development, for example in the assumption that it is “clear that developments in the area of gender equality have had direct bearing on Sweden’s strong economic growth” and that “greater gender equality contributes to more sustainable development and poverty reduction – a well-established connection” (Table S, Assumptions). The causality in this statement can be questioned, also according to Cornell & Rivas (2015, 399): “While improving women’s opportunities for formal employment and access to increased wages is certainly important, and gender equality can positively stimulate economic growth, recent work has highlighted that the causal link is inconsistent and complex”. This shows that gender equality can be seen as both the means and the ends of IDC projects, which further connects to the assumption that reaching equality is in itself not enough. It might motivate efforts from those who might not see it as enough worthy goal. This portrays a rather instrumental view, with focus on efficiency and productivity, ensuring that working for gender issues is worthwhile. A need to justify the investment women’s empowerment (Eyben & Napier-More, 2010) is prevalent in the SFFP documents. This is something that is not found in the document from AGIMS when searching for problem definitions and framing of gender issues.

A negative correlation with market driven impacts on gender equality is instead noted in the documents of AGIMS, seen in problem representations related to gender equality impacts of the arrival of the mining company in the territory. Conflicting views on land ownership and extraction of natural resources have led to increased levels of violence (against women and in general) with the assumption that it is caused from “the patriarchal culture that is promoted in these types of companies (especially around bars and canteens frequented by workers)” (Table G, Assumptions).
7.3 Strategies

**Gender mainstreaming**

Besides being based on binding international commitments, agreements and conventions, the SFFP is stated to be a reflection and an extension of the domestic gender equality policy, adopted in 2008, in where gender mainstreaming is stated to be the government’s main strategy for achieving the policy goals (S:1, p. 7). The concept gender mainstreaming is mentioned 26 times (15 in S:1 and 11 times in S:2) in total in both documents. Gender mainstreaming is explained as an all-encompassing practice, stating “that a gender perspective must be incorporated in all policies that affect people’s rights, living conditions and opportunities” (S:1, p.8) when describing the domestic feminist policy. Other than that, the concept of gender mainstreaming is not at all explained or defined, or how it would be operationalized as a strategy in international development cooperation. Only in one case, in the goal to increase the number of gender equality experts and for their placement at higher levels within the UN system (Table S, Goal), a specific example of the strategy is presented. The assumption here is arguably made that this goal would, in turn, affect the gender-issue “on the field”, among individuals in local contexts.

As the organizational documents from AGIMS come from a grassroot perspective, it seems pointless to directly comparing strategies between AGIMS and the SFFP, as they operate on such different levels and size as institutions/organizations. As the promotion of the inclusion of men and boys in the work for gender equality is an element of gender mainstreaming, this practice and approach is presented in AGIMS (Table G, Strategy). Descriptively, however, the argument departs from an Indigenous worldview and idea of equilibrium, departing from the man as an individual to make it possible for him to move from an assigned and imposed masculinity and a new opted masculinity (G:1, p. 29-30). A noteworthy strategy of AGIMS in their work against violence is social theatre. Using forms of art and culture to spread a message and challenge normative behaviour, is a prevalent method in Latin America\textsuperscript{iii}. In an IDC project targeting gender inequality and using social theatre, the scenario of measuring results and impacts with RBM seems complicated. There might be immense positive results in a local context, which then might not get through to the perspective of the funder in the aid

\textsuperscript{iii} Knowledge I have acquired during my internship at the CSO
Gender mainstreaming in IDC is a contested and complex strategy (Brière & Auclair 2020), as the field works within the paradigm of neoliberal global structures and power relations. Gender mainstreaming, in combination with RBM, presents a rather technical and instrumental approach to gender equality. With prevalent demands of quantitative indicators and results in current ICD projects, gender mainstreaming constitutes of a rather rigid, top-down approach, reflecting neoliberal values and practices. In this perspective, in relation to power relations in the aid chain, the SFFP risks to mainstream and favor ‘western’ notions of feminism (Mohanty 1988), and in the process, silence others. Yet, a stated strategy of SFFP (Table S, Strategy) is the support of feminist movements in other countries. This means that gender mainstreaming policies in IDC most likely increases international funding to organizations such as AGIMS, strengthening grassroot feminist movements. This in turn, has a potential of having a direct impact, shifting ownership of projects (Brolin 2017a) and support social change from below.

7.4 Goals

Goals of empowerment – The victim/empowered nexus

In regard to the fact that discourse has the potential to reproduce gendered stereotypical patterns, victimization of women could potentially be harmful for structural social change towards gender equality (Allwood, 2013; Archibald, 2020; Cornwall & Rivas 2015). The word ‘victim’ is in SFFP used in context such as “through Swedish support to CSOs and other actors, such as UN Women, Sweden has been able to contribute to support centers and sheltered housing for victimized women” (S:1, p. 34). In the Swedish documents, the term is also most often used in relation to violence victims but also mentioned in contexts of child marriage, human trafficking and genital mutilation, which according to Cornwall & Rivas (2015, p. 400) is in development discourses in the global North considered to be a main social and cultural hindrance for women’s empowerment.

The presentation of women as victims do also occur in AGIMS’ documents, within the problem representations in Table G. Here, it’s used in contexts such as where women are
described as victims to marginalization, racism and multiple discrimination, that access to justice for Indigenous women who are victims and survivors of violence is one of the most serious problems facing the country, and that women are victims of (direct and indirect) violence caused by the mining company in the territory. However, in the documents of AGIMS, this discursive framing is acknowledged as a target to move away from. They strive for “women survivors of violence to overcome victimization” (Table, Goals) through “spaces for emotional recovery”, such as psychological clinical care (Table G, Strategy). Hence, an inclusion of a discursive perspective is made, acknowledging its potential bearing.

Empowerment as particularly related to economy is mentioned 20 times in S:1* (out of 36 times in general). In the AGIMS documents, empowerment is not mentioned in relation to economy, notwithstanding that the targeted issue of “Poverty and lack of employment” (Table G, Goals), but the issues is framed in terms of economic alternatives and economic autonomy rather than empowerment. In Table G (Goals), empowerment is used as a goal in the context of collective empowerment of the organization itself and in terms of political training for empowerment (Table G, Strategy), or in the strategy to “strengthen their Indigenous identity and their relationship with Mother Earth, as a tool for our empowerment.” (Table G, Strategy). The concept of empowerment is used differently, in the SFFP generally in reference to an economic empowerment of the woman as an individual (Cornwall and Rivas 2015) and in AGIMS more as a collective force.

Goals of the result agenda

The inclination towards the result agenda is easily recognized in the Swedish documents. To support and manifest the SFFP, a goal is stated to be to develop result-oriented management in the internal work of Foreign Services (Table S, Goals). Also, the stated aspiration of the policy itself to “be an agenda for change and results to strengthen the rights, representation and resources of all women and girls” (S:1, p 4) is also rather explicit. Further, a main “tool” presented to implement the goals of the SFFP is the “international oversight and monitoring” (S:1, p.2). However, in the documents, this mostly covers the mechanisms of the oversight and monitoring for international human rights conventions.

* Due to translation difficulties of the concept ‘empowerment’ in Swedish, these representations/framing in S:2 is not included in this analysis
Examples of “concrete results” are presented as implementation of gender policies, strategies and action plans (Table S, Strategy) among multilateral actors. In this regard, an assumption is contextually made in the SFFP, being that monitoring commitments is essential to advancing global gender equality work (Table S, Assumptions). However, this can be seen as short-term results in the strive for global gender equality, a typical downfall of the result agenda (eg. Vähämäki 2017). On the other hand, such demonstrated results can be interpreted as contributions to as processes, rather than the questioned strategic, linear, rational, quantifiable results encouraged in RBM. This would in such case be a more appropriate approach when addressing complex social issues, such as gender equality. What is assumed here though, is that the writing and implementing of gender policies in multilateral institutions in turn leads to increased global gender equality for all individuals.

As with above-mention “gender mainstreaming goal”, that is, to increase the number of gender equality experts and for their placement at higher levels within the UN system (Table S, Goal), the goals and strategies are only processes assumed to improve gender equality per-se. Which is more than fine, as long as the requirements of results are adapted accordingly. However, these examples can be seen as instances of the statement that gender equality policies have become increasingly separated from implementation (Brière & Auclair 2020, p. 505). According to this analysis, it is questionable if the fulfillment of these goal, or their ‘results’, would contribute to structural social change in the gender equality issue.

Another problem statement (Table S, Problem representation) is that gender equality is a low priority from the global perspective. This is assumed due to the low allocation of resources targeted for gender equality initiatives in international development cooperation. This approach to the issue unveils another assumption (Table S, Assumptions) and belief that gender equality can be achieved if resources are distributed accordingly. The causality in this assumption reflects, again, rather mechanical perspectives and values on the issue, reflecting the premises of RBM (Drechsler, 2005; Brolin, 2017a) that results and change can be made provided that the right instruments and techniques are applied.

Not unlike the Swedish approach, organization practices and management is seen as a priority also in AGIMS. The number one stated focus area of AGIMS is “Organizational empowerment and strengthening” with a specific goal to create a planning, monitoring and evaluation system (Table G, Goal). Their annual report (G:2) demonstrates the achievement
of respective Focus Areas with around 5-10 photos demonstrating the conducted activities. In relation to receiving funding from Sweden, a plausible estimate would be that the report of AGIMS would be considered insufficient in regard to requirements result reporting management prevalent in RBM.

8. Conclusions

In this section, I conclude and discuss the insights of the conducted study, starting with answers, comments and observations in regard to the research questions, and finishing with some general thoughts and contribution to the ongoing academic debate. As previously mentioned, the study is conducted for two purposes, one: contributing to a de-colonization of discourse and communication within the development sector and two: optimizing the outcomes of the gender quality projects, initiatives, efforts.

Intercultural perspectives on gender policies and result reporting

Several specific issues in previous chapter shows how result reporting in IDC projects might be affected, at least discursively, by different values, worldviews and cultures which are reflected in the analyzed goals, strategies, problem representation and assumptions. For example, collective empowerment versus economic empowerment (goals), the practice social theatre for social change (strategy), women as victims (problem representation) and human/nature relationships (assumptions). When goals and strategies to not align as they are underpinned by different contextual assumptions through problem representation, the unequal global and financial power relations become more prevalent.

With the critical and postcolonial approach, the inquiring on how social problems are represented, policies demonstrate to carry forms of institutionalized values and ideologies. Policies, and the organizational documents they influence, are in this study seen as communicative tools within and between IDC organizations. Thus, they are an important scrutinizing target in order to decolonize approaches, practices and discourses in the field of
international development cooperation. With them, ideas, discourses, ideologies and values travel the world through various contexts and cultures. If this, together with notions of social power relations, is not taken to account, it may contribute to the re-production of the structural issues and even hamper the intended social change.

The goals set out by the SFFP are rather comprehensive and ambitious. As the first of its kind, it can be seen as a form of institutionalized feminism, that is, a political ideology, coming from a government body. In order to not be too influenced, or even blinded, by the “commonsensical good” (Bacchi 2012) in the goal of gender equality, the ambition of being in the forefront of the work for feminism globally and in IDC, is, at least discursively, quite radical. Putting critical and reflexive thought into practice, let’s challenge ‘the truth’ that gender equality (at least in the way it is presented in the SFFP) should be spread and prevail globally. Replace the word ‘Feminism’ in the Swedish foreign policy with another political identity, ideology, or maybe even religion for that matter, the policy appears as rather uncompromising.

To further challenge ones commonsensical values, figure 3 (“Social and discursive mechanisms of colonialism” by Roth, 2017) in chapter 4, can be used for a little thought experiment. Play with the idea that ‘Gender Equality/Mainstreaming’ could be added as a part of the ‘Global Market’ under ‘Global Design’ in the figure, and relate the study’s insights on the Victim/Empowered nexus on ‘Gendering’ and/or ‘Binary opposition’. For good or bad, operatively or discursively, Sweden manifest and disseminates the domestic policy, norms and ideology.

Power relations and dominant discourses constitutes a fundamental issue in international initiatives for social change. Continuous critical inquiry aimed to those who construct global agendas and foreign policies is crucial when communicating for and about development. This study sheds light on the potential differences that can rupture the idea of a unanimous goal for gender equality. The comparative analysis demonstrates some fundamental differences on how goals, strategies and accompanying problem representation and assumptions are presented at both ends of the aid chain. Conclusively, institutionalized goals and strategies with their inherent problem representation and assumptions, when operationalized, might cause discrepancies in the IDC projects its result reporting.
There are not many spaces for negation from the bottom/receiving organisation in the aid chain, as they have to comply to the discourses and result reporting of funders. However, here the middlemen, as in the civil society organisations with local, contextual knowledge and experiences, have an important intermediary role. They are the vital link in the aid chain, contributing with interpretations of top-down policies and demands for results, potentially and hopefully also counterbalancing some power relations.

In line with the several ComDev theories and scholars, this study argues that the international development field would benefit from more reflexive and horizontal approaches and work strategies. Notions on how power dynamics of funding and policy-making affects the actors at the end of the aid chain should consistently be taken into account. Efficacy must be balanced with recognition to local and cultural contexts, values and worldviews. In IDC projects, coherence throughout the aid chain in regard to what the targeted issues are and how they should be tackled, and also their causes, could facilitate the mission for structural social change. If power relations in normative practices and discourse are not acknowledged, policies can be counterproductive in this regard.

**Final words**

Based on this study, I argue that the risk of reproducing structural causes to the initial targeted social issue increases with (non-context or culture sensitive) operational strategies, such as result-based management. With the excessive focus on providing measurable results, the practices and strategies implemented to reach the original objective, risks to become the goal itself in the operational work of IDC at the ‘funding-end’ of the aid chain. Looking in the rear-view mirror, global designs have historically often become trojan horses for colonial discourses and practices. Seeing NPM and RBM as a function and/or operationalization of globalization and market-driven values, this study provides a call for caution to its focus in international projects for social change.

Important final note is that this study should by no means be interpreted as critique towards a global aspiration for gender equality. It is rather a call for problematizing what underlying values that is steering and dictating the work, also to avoid risks of counterproductivity in the strive for this important social change of equality among genders. As reflexivity is called for in the field, a significant step is to also problematize what often, and by many, is regarded as
an objectively ‘good cause’. As always with complex issues, dichotomies and simplistic approaches might fail to contribute to positive change, and in worst case, even hamper it. The study contributes to the academic debate in where institutionalized, top-down approaches, such as the result agenda, or gender mainstreaming, as a global one size fits all, are challenged.
9. Bibliography


