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**Gender Activism and
Rural Development in China**

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Tamara Jacka
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TAMARA JACKA

Guest Editor's Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, gender activists and organizations have been at the forefront of a burgeoning civil society in China. With funding from overseas agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Ford Foundation, Oxfam Hong Kong, members of the All China Women's Federation (a "mass organization" affiliated with the Chinese state, which is responsible for protecting women's interests; henceforth "Women's Federation") and those of newly established women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as individual scholars and activists, have made major contributions to social development, gender equality, and the improvement of the situation of Chinese women.

To date, overseas commentators have paid considerable attention to the work of Chinese feminist philosophers and women's studies scholars,¹ and to the emergence of a network of women's groups and activists working in urban areas, especially Beijing.² However, there have been very few English-language studies published on the work of activists and organizations in the area of gender and rural development. In addition, few of the writings of activists and scholars in this field are available in English. This is despite the fact that, first of all, the majority of the population live in rural areas, and the most serious forms of gender discrimination and disadvantage are faced by rural women; and second, organizations, activists, and scholars in the field of gender and rural development are making major contributions to scholarship and to gender activism and the improvement of women's lives. Indeed, both in terms of the funding they receive and the impact they have on society, the development projects and other activities run by women's activists and groups in rural areas are at least as significant, if not considerably more significant, than women's activism in Beijing and other urban centers.

The author is grateful to the Australian Research Council for funding research on *Changing Approaches to Gender and Rural Development*, on which this article draws. Many thanks also to Yang Lichao and Mei-Ling Ellerman (Gender Relations Centre, Australian National University) for their help in selecting and editing the translations in this issue.

In this collection, we seek to address this lacuna in the English-language literature on gender activism in China by translating a selection of the most recent writing from Chinese scholars and activists working in the area of gender and rural development.³ In total, seven articles are presented, addressing the key concerns dominating the field in the 2000s. The first three articles present general outlines and analyses of major issues. The next two articles provide findings from recent multi-site surveys on gender inequality and poverty in rural China, and the final two present case studies of particular research and development projects.

"Women and Development in China" provides a historical outline of the ways in which issues relating to rural development, gender inequality, and the disadvantages faced by rural women have been addressed in China over the last several decades. The author, Gao Xiaoxian, is founder and head of the Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family. Established in 1986, the association is one of the longest-running women's NGOs in China.⁴ Since 1997, it has run numerous rural community development projects throughout Shaanxi province. In this article, Gao first outlines the approaches taken to women, gender, and development in China since the 1950s, and introduces the key players in the field today: the Women's Federation, women's studies scholars, and overseas donor agencies. She argues that each of these groups have both strengths and weaknesses, and calls for them to collaborate more closely in finding ways to improve women's participation in development.

Gao also discusses the key problems and challenges facing the field of women/gender and development. She puts particular weight on the problems inherent in mainstream Chinese discourse, in which rural women's disadvantage is seen as resulting from their "low quality," a phrase which refers primarily to lack of education, but also has connotations of backwardness. This, Gao argues, is a "blame the victim" discourse, which is not just unjust to women, but detracts attention from the deeper, institutional roots of gender inequality. In the several years since Gao first published this article, many gender activists have joined her criticism of the discourse on women's "low quality." Nevertheless, the constitution of the Women's Federation continues to give high priority to "raising women's quality." Furthermore, most development projects, including those run by both the Women's Federation and women's NGOs, continue to put greatest effort into raising women's "quality," for example, by providing training classes, and direct less attention to challenging the social norms, divisions of labor, and other institutions that underpin gender inequality.⁵

In addition to this, Gao argues that improvements in women's participation in development depend upon a much greater integration of gender concerns into all levels of policymaking and legislation. As she indicates, since the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the Chinese state has adopted the UN's rhetoric about the need for gender "mainstreaming." However, as elsewhere, the institutionalization of gender concerns entailed in "mainstreaming" has been slow to occur.⁶

Finally, Gao calls for improvements in the design and implementation of development projects and processes. She argues that more effective ways must be found to recognize the needs of different groups and to address power relations within communities, so that the most marginalized within the community, including women and the poor, are able to voice their needs and be heard. In addition, researchers and activists must find ways to ensure that project interventions go beyond addressing women's most immediate "practical needs" to also tackle "strategic gender needs," that is, to challenge the underlying causes of inequalities between women and men.⁷

"Chinese Women and Poverty Alleviation: Reflections and Prospects for the Future" is by Lin Zhibin, director of the Action Research Center with Migrant Workers, Beijing, and a well-known researcher on gender and development issues.⁸ This article reflects on the relationship between gender and poverty alleviation, one of the main concerns for development activists and scholars today. Over the last few decades, gender research and advocacy has had a significant impact on poverty measurement, analysis, and policy. Most obviously, analyses sensitive to differences and inequalities in the circumstances of men and women have led to the realization that "poverty has a woman's face."⁹ As Lin notes, this is as much the case in China as it is elsewhere in the world. Despite the lack of relevant sex-disaggregated statistical data, it is clear that women, and in particular rural women, suffer the greatest levels of poverty in China.

Beyond this, work on gender has contributed to increasingly sophisticated conceptualizations of poverty as a dynamic, multidimensional concept, and of approaches to the eradication of poverty that challenge the complex interrelations between poverty, education, and other "assets," "capabilities," and power.¹⁰ In the article presented here, Lin Zhibin distinguishes between three types of poverty: income poverty, time poverty, and asset poverty. In each case, it is rural women who suffer the greatest levels of poverty. Lin attributes rural women's poverty in income to the comparatively low incomes earned in agriculture and to the "feminization" of agricultural labor, a trend widely noted and debated in China studies literature since the 1990s.¹¹ Income poverty, Lin further argues, is the result of time and asset poverty. In other words, women earn less income than men, first, because they must allocate so much of their time to unpaid work, including domestic work and child rearing, and to subsistence food production, and second, because they are disadvantaged, relative to men, in terms of access to, and control over, the assets needed for social and economic participation, including health, education, land and other natural resources, financial resources (such as property and access to credit), and social networks. Considerable further evidence is provided for the link between gender inequalities, income poverty, and asset poverty in subsequent articles in this collection—in the fourth article in relation to capital assets, and in the fifth in relation to education.

Lin also outlines and critiques Chinese government and NGO efforts to alleviate poverty among women. She focuses on two areas: microcredit programs

and participatory village planning. Microcredit programs have often been used elsewhere to alleviate poverty and to empower the marginalized, especially poor women. Their use for these purposes has also been criticized, with several feminists claiming that access to microcredit fails to expand women's choices, and instead, increases their burdens.¹² However, on balance, Lin claims, microcredit has been shown to be quite effective in redressing the poverty of families and individuals, especially women.¹³ With regard to participatory village planning, Lin argues that the inclusion of gender concerns is an important step forward. To date, however, lack of resources and resistance among village leaders have seriously undermined efforts at ensuring the participation of ordinary villagers—male or female—in village planning, let alone the amelioration of gender inequalities.

Lin proposes several means by which both government departments and NGOs might integrate gender concerns more effectively into poverty alleviation and development efforts. Essentially, these are different forms of gender "mainstreaming," the need for which is highlighted in the article by Gao Xiaoxian. They include gender budgets, the strengthening of national structures for promoting gender equality, the collection of sex-disaggregated statistical data, and the integration of gender into all levels of participatory village planning, including the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of plans, as well as their design.

"The Disempowered Participation of Women's Federations in International Development Projects" is by Ye Jingzhong, a member of the School of Humanities and Development, China Agricultural University, a group of researchers whose work in the field of development studies has been highly influential. In the post-Mao period, the Women's Federation has been much criticized as being merely a "mouthpiece" for the Chinese Communist Party, as being out of touch with and unable to address the needs of ordinary women, and for focusing too much on the supposed "low quality" of women at the expense of challenging the institutions and norms that underpin gender inequality.¹⁴

The Women's Federation has responded quite vigorously to these criticisms, continually seeking to improve its work, undertaking and promoting research, and supporting and engaging with newly emerging nongovernmental women's groups. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a growing appreciation, both among local NGO activists and outside observers, of the importance of the Women's Federation to the women's movement in China, not just because of the advantages it possesses as a state-sanctioned institution with a vast national network of representatives, but also because of the dedication of its members, especially at the grass roots. Sadly, however, activists in the Women's Federation seeking to make genuine contributions to social development and gender equality continue to face enormous constraints. As Ye Jingzhong illustrates, this is not solely, or even primarily, a matter of being restricted within the bounds of Communist Party policy. Rather, Women's Federation representatives are severely restricted by lack of funds and authority within the Chinese state bureaucracy and this is only compounded by the particular ways in which they have been co-opted into foreign-funded devel-

opment projects. Nowadays, attention to gender concerns and the participation of representatives of the Women's Federation is a requirement of all large-scale international development projects. Ye shows, however, that in practice, implementing departments and project workers pay only token attention to gender; and limit the Women's Federation's participation to attendance at project meetings and participation in the early stages of the project, rather than involving them in all stages of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Without funds and with very little power relative to other state bodies in charge of managing and implementing international development projects, grassroots representatives of the Women's Federation are severely hampered in their ability to work toward gender equality and rural development.

The articles in the second part of this collection present data from surveys carried out in 2005 by members of the School of Humanities and Development, China Agricultural University, in five poor, rural counties in central and western China. These articles clearly demonstrate the multiplicity of forms that gender inequality takes in rural China, and the complex web of interrelations that exist between these multiple forms of inequality and poverty.

"Gender Inequality and Poverty in Asset Ownership" reports on gender inequalities in capital assets, including land, housing, means of transport and communication, water, and savings and credit. In all these areas, the authors show, women commonly have less access to and control over assets than men. Because of the importance of land to rural household security and subsistence, the authors pay most attention to gender inequalities in land distribution, use rights, and control, as well as in ownership and decision making relating to housing. They echo the concerns of other scholars and activists, both in China and elsewhere, that women's lack of control over property weakens their position in the household and leaves them vulnerable to destitution, especially in the case of outmigration or divorce.¹⁵ Compounding this, the article shows that women play a lesser role than men in decision making relating to farming practices, have less access to means of transport and communication and are less mobile than men, suffer more as a result of inadequate supplies of water, and are less likely to have control over bank loans. All of these disadvantages are both exacerbated by, and further contribute to, poverty.

"Gender Inequality in Rural Education and Poverty" presents data from a survey on gender inequalities in education. This survey finds that girls are discriminated against in education in several different ways: their families have lower expectations for their education than for their sons'; the scarcity of schools and their remoteness from villagers' homes has a greater impact on girls and also contributes to a lack of female teachers; girls' opportunities for schooling are more limited, in particular by heavy workloads; their enrolment rates are lower than boys' and their dropout rates are higher; and they spend fewer years in school than boys. Again, the authors argue that these forms of discrimination are both greatly exacerbated by, and contribute to, other forms of inequality and poverty. In the poorest households, spending on girls' education is given lowest priority. Furthermore, girls are

more likely to be drawn out of school to work at home or in the fields, especially when men leave home in search of employment. With less education, women have fewer opportunities for political participation and less access to information and technical skills. Consequently, they are more likely to remain in the poorest sector of the economy—agriculture—and to be less able to lift themselves, and their families, out of poverty.

This article lends support to the oft-made claim that educating women is the key to poverty alleviation and to women's empowerment. This understanding of the significance of women's education now underpins much development policy, including the UN's Millennium Development Goals. Some scholars, however, have highlighted limitations to this kind of focus on women's education. For example, Ellen Judd shows that in rural north China, while the poorest women cannot afford to devote time and effort toward taking basic literacy classes, at the other end of the scale, the minority of women who *do* achieve relatively high levels of formal education are prevented from translating that into better jobs by the patrilocal marriage system and discrimination in their husband's village against the employment of in-marrying women in local industries.¹⁶

The third part of this collection presents two case studies. "Tracing the Development of the Gender and Natural Resource Management Group" is by Su Cuiwei, a member of the Yunnan Gender and Development Group, an influential group in the field of gender activism and rural development in the southwest of China. The Yunnan Group was established in 1998 as part of the Yunnan Participatory Development Institute, a formally registered NGO. This article discusses the activities of one wing of the Gender and Development Group, the six-member Gender and Natural Resources Management Group, established in 2000. More particularly, the article outlines the strategies that the group adopted in a development project established in Nanduan, a Lahu village on the China-Burma (Myanmar) border. The Lahu are one of the fifty-six ethnic groups officially recognized by the People's Republic of China. An estimated 450,000 live in China's Yunnan province, and about 262,000 are dispersed across Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. The Lahu are predominantly animist and Buddhist, practice slash-and-burn agriculture, and are a matrilineal society. In all these respects, they are very different from the Han Chinese. This article thus alerts us to one of the biggest challenges of gender activism and development work in rural China, namely, the fact that China encompasses a vast array of ethnic groups with widely varying social and gender orders and very different developmental needs.

The Gender and Natural Resources Management Group found that Lahu women in Nanduan have very heavy workloads, spending hours each day gathering firewood, as well as cooking, caring for children, and taking primary responsibility for raising pigs. They have a relatively high status in the family and a high degree of authority in relation to the family economy, especially in relation to the raising of pigs. However, men in the village dominate decision making and control over key resources, including firewood and water.

The original aim of the Nanduan project was to promote more ecologically sustainable development and to lighten workloads, especially of women, by reducing the consumption of firewood. As a result of participatory needs assessment, the design of the project changed somewhat, to focus on the introduction of new methods of raising pigs, which involved feeding the animals uncooked, rather than cooked, fodder. The new methods promised to improve the profitability of raising pigs and also to reduce the consumption of firewood and the time women spent in gathering firewood. On the other hand, it looked likely that the project would lead to an increase in the number of pigs raised and, hence, to even greater workloads for women. This points to a common dilemma in development projects: that the activities viewed as most successful and desirable by villagers (men and women), because they lead to improved incomes, also often result in disproportionate increases in women's workloads. They therefore compound gender inequalities and can even lead to serious declines in women's well-being. In the article presented here, Su Cuiwei shows a keen awareness both of the need to overcome this problem by challenging gender divisions of labor and of the complexity of this task and the limitations of the Nanduan project in this respect.

"The Prevention and Cure of AIDS in Rural Areas" is by Liang Jun, one of the founders of the Women's Academy and Women's Museum in Henan province. In 1998, she established the Henan Community Education Research Center, another very important women's NGO, which is dedicated to women's development and the construction of community grassroots organizations. This article describes an AIDS community intervention project run by the center.

Since the 1990s, a rapid increase in HIV infection rates across China¹⁷ has been accompanied by an increase in the proportion of women among those infected, from approximately 11 percent in the period 1990–1995 to between 19.4 percent and 29.4 percent in the period 2000–2005.¹⁸ This matches global trends, whereby HIV infection rates are increasing faster among women than men, and the ratio of women to men among those infected has reached almost 1 : 1.¹⁹ In China, as elsewhere, this trend is fuelled by a multiplicity of forms of gender discrimination and inequality. In particular, gender norms and power inequalities between men and women render women, whether they are sex workers, wives, or other sexual partners, less able to exert control in sexual relations and more vulnerable to unsafe sex and sexual violence. Lower rates of education and higher levels of poverty also limit the access that women, especially poor rural women, have to information on HIV and AIDS and to health care. They also increase their susceptibility to ill health, including reproductive illness, which further increases their susceptibility to the sexual transmission of HIV. Gender norms have also shaped patterns of infection through the unhygienic collection and sale of blood, this being one of the main modes of HIV transmission in China. According to a recent report, in general, more men than women sell blood, due to a perception that men should be the income providers in the family, and they are more mobile than women. (Sometimes people need to travel long distances in order to sell blood.) However, in some communi-

ties, including the village in which the Henan Community Education Research Center's project was based, the women have been the primary blood sellers, due to a perception that women are better able to cope with blood loss because they are used to losing blood during menstruation and because their work burden is seen to be less physically demanding.²⁰

Until the early 2000s, neither state programs and policies on HIV and AIDS nor the approaches taken by most HIV and AIDS activists and NGOs addressed gender concerns to any significant extent and links were rarely made between policies on gender equality and those on HIV and AIDS.²¹ Since that time, however, the relationship between gender and HIV and the "feminization" of HIV/AIDS has been gaining greater attention. Several UN agencies, as well as international NGOs, have sponsored research, training, services, and development projects focusing specifically on HIV/AIDS and gender and/or on the prevention of AIDS among Chinese women. Funding for this purpose has gone to the Women's Federation and to Chinese women's NGOs, as well as to academic, professional, and state bodies.²² The Henan Community Education Research Center's project was one of the earliest such projects. It was carried out in the period 2002–2004, with funding from Oxfam Hong Kong, in Shangcai county, Henan, where the number of people infected with HIV as a result of blood-selling practices is particularly high. The project was the first foreign-funded AIDS-prevention project to have been run by an NGO in that county. Lessons learned from that project included the importance of local government support; the need for self-organizing among people living with HIV and AIDS and the centrality played by them in community interventions; the need for health education; and the intimate connections between the spread of AIDS and individuals' educational level, socioeconomic status, status in the family, reproductive health, and legal protection.

Taken together, the articles in this collection present a bleak picture of widespread gender discrimination and disadvantage suffered by women in contemporary rural China. However, they also give cause for optimism, demonstrating a high level of concern and efforts to overcome such problems on the part of an active and growing movement of gender and development activists and scholars across the country.

Notes

1. See, for example, Gail Hershtatter, Emily Honig, Susan Mann, and Lisa Rofel, ed., *Guide to Women's Studies in China* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1998); Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).

2. See, for example, Ping-chun Hsiung, Maria Jaschok, and Cecilia Milwertz, with Red Chan, *Chinese Women Organizing: Cadres, Feminists, Muslims, Queers* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001); Cecilia Milwertz, *Beijing Women Organizing for Change: A New Wave of the Chinese Women's Movement* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2002); Sharon Wesoky, *Chinese Feminism Faces Globalization* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).

3. In line with the language used most often by scholars and activists in China today, I use the phrases "gender activism" and "gender and development" rather than "women's

activism" and "women and development." It should be noted, however, that, in practice, gender and development activists and scholars pay far more attention to women than to gender relations and institutions, and men are rarely targeted for gender and development project interventions. This is characteristic of the gender and development field worldwide.

4. See www.westwomen.org/index.html. For an account by Gao Xiaoxian of her own history in gender activism and of the emergence of the Shaanxi Association for Women and Family, see Gao Xiaoxian, "Strategies and Space: A Case Study of the Shaanxi Association for Women and Family," in *Chinese Women Organizing*, ed. Hsiung et al.; Milwertz, *Beijing Women Organizing for Change*, 193–208.

5. For further discussion and critique of Chinese gender and development activists' emphasis on "raising women's quality," see Tamara Jacka, "Approaches to Women and Development in Rural China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 49 (2006): 585–602.

6. For a discussion of the failures of gender "mainstreaming" see several articles in *Development Bulletin* 64 (2004) (Special issue on gender and development).

7. The distinction between "practical" and "strategic" gender needs was first articulated by Maxine Molyneux. See Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization Without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua," *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 2 (1985): 227–54.

8. For another English-language article co-authored by Lin Zhibin, see Lin Zhibin and Zhang Lixin, "Gender, Land, and Local Heterogeneity," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 49 (2006): 637–50.

9. At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 it was claimed that poverty increasingly had a "woman's face" and that women constituted roughly 70 percent of the world's 1.3 billion people living in poverty. See Sylvia Chant, "Contributions of a Gender Perspective to the Analysis of Poverty," in *Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice: Institutions, Resources, and Mobilization*, ed. Jane S. Jaquette and Gale Summerfield (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 98.

10. Chant, "Contributions of a Gender Perspective to the Analysis of Poverty," 87–106.

11. See Tamara Jacka, *Women's Work in Rural China: Continuity and Change in an Era of Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

12. Patrick Kilby, "Questioning Empowerment: Lessons from Women's Groups in India," Participatory Development Working Paper, No. 06/03 (September 2006), Master of Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development (MAAPD) Program, the Australian National University, <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/maapd>, p. 7. See also Anne Marie Goetz and Rita Gupta, "Who Takes the Credit? Gender, Power, and Control over Loan Use in Rural Credit Programmes," *World Development* 24, no. 1 (1996): 49.

13. Microcredit programs are increasingly being introduced into rural China by NGOs as well as the state. For a brief critique of such NGO microcredit programs, see Myriam Bartu, "'Searching in the Dark' for the Credit Switch," *China Development Brief* (14 October, 2006), www.chinadevelopmentbrief.com/node/814.

14. See Gao Xiaoxian, "Women and Development in China: An Analysis and Reappraisal of Practice," *Chinese Sociology and Anthropology* 40, no. 4 (Summer 2008): 13–26; Emily Honig and Gail Hershtatter, *Personal Voices: Chinese Women in the 1980s*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 318; Gordon White, Jude Howell, and Shang Xiaoyuan, *In Search of Civil Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 80–82.

15. See Yang Li and Xi Yin-sheng, "Married Women's Rights to Land in China's Traditional Farming Areas," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 49 (2006): 621–36; Lin Zhibin and Zhang Lixin, "Gender, Land, and Local Heterogeneity," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 49 (2006): 637–50; Tamara Jacka, *Rural Women in Urban China: Gender, Migration, and Social Change* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 94–95.

16. See also Naila Kabeer, *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2003), 175–81.

17. The first case of HIV/AIDS was reported in China in 1985. By the end of 2001 it was estimated that the number of people living with HIV/AIDS was between 850,000 and 1.5 million. Susie Jolly with Wang Ying, "Key Issues on Gender and HIV/AIDS in China: Report for DFID" (27 January 2003), www.siyanda.org/docs_genie/jolly_aidschina.doc, p. 4.

18. According to a report prepared for DFID, women comprised about 11 percent of all those living with HIV and AIDS in the period 1990–1995, and about 29.4 percent in 2001 (Jolly, "Key Issues on Gender and HIV/AIDS in China"). Statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Health put the proportion of women among those infected with HIV at 19.4 percent in 2000 and 28.1 percent by March 2005 ("China Strengthens Prevention, Treatment of HIV/AIDS Among Women: White Paper," *People's Daily Online*, http://english.people.com.cn/200508/24/eng20050824_204327.html, accessed 3 October 2007).

19. Jolly, "Key Issues on Gender and HIV/AIDS in China," p. 4.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

22. UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), for example, recently established a project to "Strengthen Party and Government Leadership in Addressing HIV/AIDS as a Gender Issue in Guangdong Province" in cooperation with the Research Center on People-Centered Development of the Provincial Party School and Administration College in Guangdong province. It also initiated a research project, "Prevention of HIV/AIDS in China: A Study on Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Regarding Safer Sexual Behavior," with the All China Women's Federation, the Family Planning Association of China, and the National Academy for Preventive Medicine as project partners (www.unchina.org/unifem/Projects/Previous%20Projects.htm, Accessed 3 October 2007). The Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family, with funding from the Kadoorie Charitable Foundation, Hong Kong, initiated a community health education and HIV/AIDS prevention program in Shanyang county, Shaanxi province, in 2003. The program's focus on gender and community participation is discussed in Yang Hui, "Shehui xingbie yu jiankang cujin shijian yu sikao" (Thoughts on the practice of gender and health promotion), in *Cong SARS shijian kan Zhongguo minjian zuzhi yu gonggong weisheng* (Chinese NGOs and public health since SARS), ed. Gao Xiaoxian and Li Ailing (Xi'an: Northwest University Press, 2005), 238–56.

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GAO XIAOXIAN

Women and Development in China

An Analysis and Reappraisal of Practice

"Women and development," which began in the mid-1970s with the efforts of feminist activists and the call for practice, has become a new discipline combining theory and practice. Dedicated to promoting women's participation in development and improving women's conditions and status, it is having a growing impact on international development. In China, with the rise of women's studies and increases in the number of internationally supported projects, and in particular, with the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, women and development can now be considered very much in vogue. There are growing numbers of related seminars, training classes, symposiums and projects—a gratifying change. This article endeavors to analyze and reassess the practice of women and development in recent years in order to promote the indigenization of its theory and practice.

The Collectivization Period

Women's Participation Under Social Mobilization

If we understand development to be a planned process and set of activities with defined goals, we can see that Chinese rural development began with the founding of the People's Republic of China and included land reform, the establishment of a state monopoly over the purchase and marketing of grain, and the agricultural cooperative movement, which involved a shift from mutual aid groups to people's communes. The rural modernization movement, which had ownership reform as its

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Recently, a National Committee for the Prevention and Cure of AIDS was established and the Henan provincial government has also taken an open attitude and adopted numerous measures to strengthen the prevention and cure of AIDS. It has put forward the policy of "four 'frees' and one care" for HIV-infected people and AIDS patients, that is, providing free antiretroviral drugs, free anonymous testing, free prevention of mother-to-child transmission, free schooling for AIDS orphans, and care for destitute and lonely seniors.

Government efforts will greatly ease our workload in medical treatment and aid. Currently, we have successfully applied for funding from the Ford Foundation for a "Rural Community Health Promotion Plan" project, to be developed in regions with high AIDS occurrences. The second phase of the Oxfam Hong Kong "Integrated Community Intervention in the Prevention and Cure of AIDS in Rural Areas" project is also in the process of being ratified. In the new project plan, we will attach even more importance to community health education, community care action, capacity building for the Red Ribbon Association, and the enhancement of women's rights and capacities, so as to further explore methods for rural community intervention, create appropriate living environments for HIV-infected people and AIDS patients, and promote the prevention and control of AIDS.

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