

From “WID” to “GAD” to Women’s Rights: The First Twenty Years of AWID

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On the occasion of its 20th anniversary, this paper charts not only the changes in AWID's organizational structure and goals but also the shifts in policy approaches to gender equality in a changing global environment, through the lens of a membership organization committed to improving the lives of women and girls everywhere.

In 2002, the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) celebrated its 20th anniversary. Given the challenging political, economic and funding environment in which women's organizations must survive, a milestone such as this is worthy of recognition. In the past two decades the geo-political landscape has been transformed and development theories have come and gone, but approaches to ensure women benefit from development processes have endured. In its twenty-year history, AWID grew from a volunteer organization for U.S. "WID" specialists to an international network striving to support proactive and strategic gender equality research, activism and policy dialogue.

1982 and AWID's Founding

In 1982 the United Nation's International Decade for Women (1975 - 1985) was in full swing. In the United States, "women in development" or WID policies were being approved in development agencies while universities were exploring new theories and approaches to women's role in economic development. Nevertheless, it was clear to a group of U.S. based professionals and academics that the pursuit of 'integrating women into the development process' was not something that was taken seriously by their institutions. While the Percy Amendment to the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act had been passed in 1973 (which mandated that U.S foreign aid take women into specific consideration), many U.S. women were frustrated by the fact that so little of their government's aid was actually getting to women in recipient countries.

Founding Members in 1982

Willy Campbell
Virginia Caples
Mariam Chamberlain
Kathleen Cloud
Ellen Fenoglio
Francille Firebaugh
Arvonne Fraser
Paula Goddard
Margaret Goodman

Florence Howe
Jane Jaquette
Valerina Kallab
Jane B. Knowles
Barbara D. Miller
Joyce L. Moock
Maria Otero
Rebecca Polland
Katherine P. Riddle

Kathleen Staudt
Barbara P. Thomas
Irene Tinker
Sarah Tinsley
Paula T. Valad
Anne S. Walker
Jean Weidemann
Marcia Wiss (counsel)

AWID Presidents

Jane Knowles ('82-'84)
Paula Goddard ('85)
Myra Buvinic ('86)
Mary Rojas ('87)
Kristen Timothy ('88)
Jean Weidemann ('89)
Jane Jaquette ('90-'91)
Norge Jerome ('92-'93)
Rieky Stuart ('94-'95)
Carolyn Elliott ('96-'97)

Aruna Rao ('97-'99)
Joanna Kerr ('00)
Aruna Rao ('00-'01)
Lucia Rayas ('02-'03)
Olabisi Adeleye-Fayemi ('04-'06)
Geetanjali Misra ('07-'08)
Brigid Inder ('09-'10)
Lina Abou-Habib ('11-'12)
Sarah Costa ('13-'14)
Myrna Cunningham Kain ('15-)

AWID Executive Directors

Nicole Etchart ('95-98)
Caryl Garcia ('99-'00)

Joanna Kerr (2000-2007)
Lydia Alpízar Durán (2007 -)

In May of 1982, a group of 26 U.S. scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers met at the Wingspread Conference Center in Wisconsin. They included staff from USAID offices, academics working on AID projects from U.S. land grant universities, economists, and academics and consultants working on development projects. The "Wingspread meeting" - as it became aptly called - resulted in the establishment of AWID: The Association for Women in Development.

AWID was created as a membership organization aimed at bringing three rather isolated constituencies together: academics, the private sector of foundations and voluntary organizations, and policy makers. This "trialogue" was meant to address the need of scholars to understand what practitioners were doing in the field, the need of practitioners to influence policy priorities, and the need of policy makers to be guided by cutting-edge research and local realities.

The "Wingspread meeting" established AWID's goals as follows:

1. to increase the awareness of the interdependence of nations, institutions, and individuals in development;
2. to ensure that women participate as active partners with men in a more equitable development process, and that they share in its benefits;
3. to strengthen research and action in the Women in Development field by increasing interaction among scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers in both private and public sectors;
4. to improve the practice of multilateral, bilateral and private institutions in the integration of women as both agents and beneficiaries of development; and,
5. to provide improved communications to a widening audience on problems and solutions relating to Women in Development.

The founding members of AWID knew that there was a burgeoning interest in the "WID" field and that AWID's goals could fill important gaps in the development community. Their first step, therefore, was to hold a large national meeting.

In 1983, through their volunteer efforts, the AWID Board (themselves representing the "trialogue") organized the first AWID Forum. The meeting was to mark the 10th anniversary of the Percy Amendment as well as to put a broader concept of "women in development" onto the policy agenda, using food and energy themes as ways of "illustrating both efficiency and equity issues". The program included panels, a banquet with Senator Percy, an opportunity to "lobby" at a reception with U.S. Congressmen, and a forum for USAID officials to demystify their operations. Prior to the Forum, AWID had 250 paying members and the entire membership was not expected to attend. In the end however, AWID organizers were overwhelmed with 850 participants to their first Forum in Washington, D.C. An organization was born.

AWID's Beginning: At the Intersection of Policy, Research and Practice

The overwhelming response to the first national conference indicated that AWID was filling a niche. In the following years, the organization would attempt to achieve its goals through biennial conferences organized solely by an elected Board of Directors who served on a volunteer basis. The membership grew (especially through the Forums), as did a U.S. national interest in women in development issues. In fact, AWID's membership, activities and organizational issues would tend to reflect the changes in approaches and theories of the WID field, as it was called then.

The mid-1980's was a time when WID was recognized in the United States, Canada and Europe as a legitimate professional field focused on women as both agents and beneficiaries of development. New methodologies were emerging for research and development practice, and WID policies were being implemented in development agencies. Meanwhile, the 2nd United Nations Conference on Women took place in Nairobi. Thousands of women gathered from around the world to review national accomplishments of the International Decade for Women, but also place new issues, like violence against women, on the policy agenda. Hundreds of new women's organizations had been formed during the Decade. At this time too, Third World feminists came to Nairobi with fresh critiques of "WID" and of North-South gender politics.

Nairobi had a major influence on AWID. AWID Forum organizers saw the major UN meeting and its preparations as "the end of the beginning", where the image of women as marginal, as victims or as consumers was giving way to a vision of "women as creators of wealth, and absolutely central to the continued existence of the human race". The theme of the 1985 AWID conference was thus *Women Creating Wealth; Transforming Economic Development*. The conference was a success, but like in Nairobi, participants wanted to hear and learn more about the "interconnection of women and major development issues such as the international debt, and the new international economic order". Moreover, women's 'wealth creation' was not always received by women outside of the U.S. as the most appropriate or meaningful way forward and feedback from participants

urged AWID to assure that the "voice of developing country women themselves become well represented in the conference dialogue".

Faced with this challenge, and given that AWID was a U.S. organization, the AWID Board considered different strategies to become more inclusive and representative. They sought relationships with networks and organizations outside of the U.S. with the intention to be "open to all, [but] â€¦not try to organize all: [the] relationship with other women's organizations internationally will be one of liaison and collaboration". Closer to home, the membership was decentralizing as AWID groups were popping up on university campuses all over the United States. Although the Board always had elected minority members, faced with criticisms that the organization was "too white", the Board also established a "Minority Membership" Task Force focusing on women of colour and Third World women.

Another issue surfaced at this time, one which would be re-examined again and again in the following years. The issue was AWID's role in lobbying or taking policy positions. While hotly debated amongst members and Board members, it was reaffirmed at the time that AWID would not take positions on policy issues, but rather would serve as a forum for dialogue among different points of view. AWID's intention in this decision was to protect the sustainability of the "dialogue", given the potentially disparate worldviews of many of its members. The Board accepted DAWN's vision that the women's movement should not waste energy arguing about the "correct view", but rather, commit to hearing from a range of viewpoints and work to understand the points of convergence and action.

Roles and Representation in the Reagan era: AWID in the late 1980s

After Nairobi, several important trends were developing around the world that would affect "WID" approaches and the work of AWID. At a retreat in 1986, AWID leaders recognized a major global trend: there was now a considerable body of research and literature on gender equality issues but it was not matched by progress in improving the lives of women - in other words, there was more awareness but little action or results. On the one hand, women's status had improved considerably in education and labour force participation while on the other, occupational and wage discrimination had intensified. Researchers recognized that the "basic human needs" approach of the 1970s had contributed to gains for women but the 1980s' "efficiency" approaches seemed more antithetical to the promotion of gender equality. Structural adjustment policies, a dwindling concern with poverty, the development community's preoccupation with child survival in isolation from women's productive roles, wars in Central America, the rise of right-to-life and right wing movements, as well as the world recession, all contributed to a considerably hostile environment in which to improve the lives of women and girls.

The late 1980s was also a period when AWID faced its first serious internal challenges and choices: What should AWID's role be given this economic and political climate? How can AWID facilitate greater involvement of women of colour and women from the Third World? And thirdly, how could the organization grow in a sustainable manner in light of the fact that it had neither a staff nor an office?

Faced with critical - though natural - identity questions, the late 1980s witnessed AWID grappling with identifying itself either as a professional women's organization or as a professional organization committed to helping women. Beyond the biennial conferences, how could AWID serve its membership (and therefore earn its title as a membership organization)? It was agreed that AWID needed to consider how best to reverse or neutralize policies that were impacting negatively on women by creating knowledge and political pressure. The organization committed to taking up more of a development education role too - particularly on important legislative changes in Washington D.C. (such as new WID programs in USAID and relevant WID bills in the U.S. Congress) while also monitoring WID development in the World Bank. AWID wanted to build on its reputation for cutting-edge research and thus started producing high-quality colloquia on key issues (in non-Forum years), newsletters and occasional papers on themes ranging from gender issues in institution building to women and environmental and housing policy.

With regards to diversity issues, a group known as the "alternatives/radical caucus" raised some concerns at the 1987 Forum on *Moving Forward: Innovations in Development Policy, Action and Research*. AWID was criticized for a lack of ideological diversity on its panels, lack of participatory or interactive sessions, and especially the lack of involvement of low-income women, women of colour and women from the Third World. Perceived as a conference that was too academic, too U.S. dominated and remote to such a large population of gender equality advocates around the world, the Board knew that they had to find ways to expand AWID's accessibility.

Financial and administrative obstacles, however, stood in the way of the major changes envisaged for AWID. After 1985, women from developing countries delivered a steadily increasing amount of the Forum's content. Such participation brought new responsibilities to the Board because it meant finding financial support for hundreds of overseas participants. Similarly, membership dues were not sufficient to pay for a permanent AWID staff and to meet Board expenses, particularly travel expenses for Third World members. The AWID Board therefore hired a consultant in 1988 to do a management review with the support a Ford Foundation planning grant. The report emphasized that AWID could not continue to grow if it had to rely entirely on the time and effort of volunteers and on in-kind contributions from organizations such as the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges. The report recommended the establishment of a permanent secretariat for general organizational management purposes. The secretariat would handle the membership database, fundraising and publications. With these recommendations, the Board concluded that a university base for the secretariat would be the most cost-effective location because it provided access to libraries and graduate student assistants. After some exploration, Virginia Polytechnic Institute was selected as the location of AWID's first secretariat. It was established on a shoestring budget of \$14,500 for the first year.

Gender and Development and Going Global: AWID in the Early '90s

The signing of the North America Free Trade Agreement, the release of Nelson Mandela, ethnic cleansing and the Balkan wars, the Gulf War, the Rwandan genocide, Hindu-Muslim Riots in India, political and economic transformation of the Former Soviet Union, the Mexican peso crisis, the UN's Earth Summit, the Human Rights Conference, the Population Conference in Cairo and

Copenhagen's Social Summit, These were just a few of the dramatic events the world was experiencing a decade ago.

Women's movements, academics and policymakers were recognizing that gender equality depended on addressing the fundamental intersections between these global forces and women's disempowerment. At the same time, WID as a policy approach was being highly criticized by Southern and Northern academics and activists alike. It had become clear that women's lives would not change by "integrating women into the development process" unless gender relations and the nature of "development" changed also. In international development circles, "Gender and Development" or GAD was the new paradigm. A focus on gender meant that development had to tackle the socially defined causes of women's subordination and the existing power relations between women and men. In legal circles, "women's rights as human rights" had been acknowledged by the U.N. and mainstream human rights organizations. This meant in particular that violence against women was increasingly being treated as a public policy issue.

Despite the significant military, political and economic transformations underway globally at the time, AWID itself was energized by the mobilization of an increasing number of activists and practitioners that were embracing gender issues. AWID hosted a very successful Forum in 1991 titled *Working Together/Learning Together: A South-North Dialogue* which was an attempt to increase AWID's international relevance, address North-South divisions more proactively, and acknowledge how much feminist leadership was actually coming out of the South. By this time too, AWID had established an awards program to honour women leaders, including Bella Abzug and Vina Mazumdar. The Forum program was rich with participatory sessions addressing issues of economics, peace, human rights and policy advocacy. Over 1000 individuals registered for the Washington D.C. meeting and more than half of the presenters were from outside of the United States. At the 1993 Forum - *Joining Forces to Further Shared Visions* - a similarly diverse and high profile program was staged. Cutting edge sessions focusing on new participatory gender and development approaches, the limited impact of gender training, reproductive rights advocacy and scores of other issues were welcomed. Preparations for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing were underway and AWID made plans to have a presence by hosting meetings in Beijing as well as in Cairo at the 1994 Population and Development Conference.

By this point, the membership was noticeably different than the initial group. Previously dominated by academics, more activists and practitioners had become visible in AWID. This reflected the burgeoning of global feminism and also the drastic cuts to academic funding in U.S. agricultural universities during the Reagan administrations. The organization was working on a variety of different means to ensure representation from different regions at every stage of the Forum planning process (e.g. Forum participants would now become members), to incorporate more theory from the Global South, as well as to assist members to advance professionally and promote social changes. Without the necessary funding for practical components like translation and an international Board, a President's Advisory Council was established. Overall, the Board was committed to building an institutional culture which valued "gender equity as a common goal, embraced multiple strategies, honoured diversity of experience and struggled to create a space in which women can speak with their own voices".

Logistically, this expanded mandate would not be possible without expanding the budget and hiring staff. But from the beginning, AWID had defined itself as a self-supporting professional association paying for its core activities from dues and Forum fees. The organization successfully survived on this strategy for years, raising the money for Southern participants with support from a range of international agencies and foundations. Naturally, this was possible only with enormous amounts of volunteer time and effort and a high tolerance for risk amongst Board members, given the lack of ensured funding. Recognizing that more funding sources had to be tapped, the Board decided to invest a considerable amount of energy in organizational development which led in 1995 to the hiring of AWID's first Executive Director and the opening of a Washington D.C. office.

AWID from Beijing '95 and Beyond: The "Institutionalization" Years

After the UN meeting and NGO conference in China - the largest international gathering of women ever - it was clear that there were a proliferation of global, regional and issue-specific women's networks, both activist and academic, that had built solidarity, voiced women's concerns and influenced policy debates at all levels. In this period, globalization was coming into focus so that "many of the issues that consumed the attention and activism of women around the world were multinational and cross-field in character with clear micro to macro links. One could no longer talk, for example, of the revitalization of traditional farming practices in remote parts of Southern countries without also talking about the gender-bias of agricultural extension systems, the center-periphery knowledge-power nexus, the role of transnational corporations and the unfavourable terms of trade".

A year after Beijing, AWID hosted another successful Forum entitled *Beyond Beijing: From Words to Action*. With over 35 collaborating international partner organizations, sub-themes on women's human rights, globalization and women's economic empowerment, health and reproductive rights, and power-sharing and political participation, a successful off-site "advocacy" event at the World Bank, and a more significant presence of participants from the global South than ever before, AWID was solidifying a persona as open and diverse. But given the number of other organizations that now existed, where should AWID focus? What programs should AWID expand on between Forums? And should AWID even continue to have the Forums given how expensive they were becoming, given their increasingly diverse and multi-lingual nature?

Based on a strategic planning process in 1996, the organization set out an ambitious three year plan. First, AWID embarked on an expanded "Triologue Program" of publications and seminars (or mini-Forums) to be held in the developing world on state of the art issues. The Forum itself would stay, as it was still AWID's flagship program, but it would occur every three years instead of every two and be truly international. Based on the demand from younger members for information and networking opportunities (in addition to a staff commitment to address the needs of this constituency) an "emerging leaders" program was put into development. With email and websites now part of most organizations' communication apparatus, "AWID-online" was also born with more information services provided electronically (including an email dispatch three times a week including jobs, events, announcements and articles). Finally, the organization also committed to an increased public affairs role - using its UN ECOSOC status, participating in the

Women's Eyes on the World Bank campaign, and developing closer affiliations with human rights organizations.

But all these great plans cost money, and neither the Board nor the staff had the capacity and time necessary for grant-seeking (nor was it always clear who was responsible for raising the funds). Similarly, were the Board or the staff to deliver these new programs? Clarification of roles and responsibilities was an on-going process in these years as the organization went through a transition from Board-led to staff-led. Increasingly the Board focused on designing and directing policy. With a new office and staff, there were certainly many new policies to draft and approve, from employee benefits to editorial policies.

Despite these growing pains, AWID convened its first "trialogue" seminar in South Africa in partnership with the African Gender Institute on gender and institutional transformation. The meeting brought together practitioners, policymakers, researchers, students, activists and academics to explore how power changes the functioning of organizations and how best to transform power to create organizational outcomes that promote gender equality. The meeting produced publications and a video and offered a welcome opportunity for AWID to be visible outside of the United States.

In fact, AWID's identity was again revisited during this period. There were those on the Board who aspired for AWID to become an international organization, while some felt that AWID should build on its strengths as a North American organization and view itself as a U.S. constituency for international development and not simply as a membership organization. Several groups in the developing world were asking to start AWID local chapters. The Board was concerned, however, that they would end up competing with local initiatives and therefore saw a collaborative relationship with existing groups as more effective. An international Board, though laudable, would be expensive to bring together on even a semi-annual basis. Given these challenges, the Board agreed to proceed slowly, bringing on non-North American Board members as was possible. In the meantime, the Board tried to attract as many developing country nationals that were based in North America as possible into the governance of the organization.

In 1999, AWID's eighth International Forum was held -- *Leading Solutions for Equality and Justice*. Planned by a group of international feminists, this meeting surpassed earlier forums in terms of international participation (1200 participants from 100 countries), media coverage, involvement of young women and networking opportunities. Many new funders supported the Forum, recognizing its potential to create a strategic space for analysis and organizing within the gender and development and women's human rights community. For the first time, Latin American delegates were represented in a substantive way catalyzing a Latin American AWID caucus known as "Grupo Latino" and a membership strategy for the hemisphere. In addition, a recurring message throughout this Forum was that feminist leadership needed to be strengthened if global and national policies and institutions were to change. The gender and development and women's human rights communities needed to take responsibility for developing the most effective strategies for gender equality - instead of demanding them from governments or mainstream movements. With all these important results, AWID came out of the 1999 Forum ready to take on the new millennium.

The New Millennium and AWID's Shift to Women's Rights

After an inspiring strategic planning session with Board and staff in early 2000, AWID was finally able to negotiate its first multi-year core grant from the Ford Foundation. With more secure resources, AWID was poised to launch new thematic programs, strengthen existing ones, take advantage of new information technologies to communicate with its membership, and reposition itself to be more proactive, politicized, and internationally relevant.

The Board and staff agreed to take on four specific thematic programs that would be addressed at the 2002 Forum and through "strategic communications" including primers, occasional papers, email discussions and smaller meetings. The four cross-cutting themes targeted to AWID's diverse membership are:

- "Women's Rights and Economic Change" which tackles how best to guarantee women's human rights in a global economy;
- "Gender Equality and New Technologies" which explores how new technologies -- from information technologies to agriculture and biotechnologies--help or hinder women's rights;
- "Young Women and Leadership" which seeks to support young women to articulate their priorities and become leaders; and
- "Feminist Organizational Development" which examines how to make women's rights organizations more strategic and effective.

In each theme, AWID set out to raise issues and ask provocative questions, to set the agenda and to act as a facilitator for constructive debate among policymakers, researchers, students and activists from all perspectives and disciplines.

In 2001, AWID also changed its name to the Association for Women's Rights in Development. The change reflected several important factors: "WID" had become outdated and carried negative baggage; AWID wanted to include more men (the former name made it seem that AWID was an association for women); and by this time, more than half of AWID's members identified themselves as working in human rights. Most importantly, the new name was to signal a shift in thinking and practice in the field. AWID sought "to bridge the gap between the fields of women's human rights and gender and development. â€| Women's rights provides the powerful language and monitoring system to assert that women's rights are an inherent part of all women's lives and gender and development is an enabling tool for overcoming the social realities that violate those rights".

In 2000, the Board also repositioned its identity squarely as an international organization. Pressures from the membership and an increasingly diverse Board closed the on-going debate about whether AWID was an international organization based in Washington D.C. or a U.S. organization working with groups outside of the country. In fact, in 2001 AWID moved its secretariat from Washington, D.C. to Toronto, Canada. The move was part of AWID's changing organizational structure that is to include a rotating secretariat - ensuring that AWID is a truly global organization. The staff structure was also transformed; program managers would be based

in the global South, supported by secretariat staff, in order to bring a range of regional perspectives to AWID's work.

Another key goal has been the expansion of AWID's membership, amongst young women and amongst regions in the global South and Eastern and Central Europe in particular. This has had several implications for the organization, including: the creation of a no-fee membership category for lower income individuals, the production of multi-lingual communications (including at least English, French and Spanish), and the abandoning of the "trialogue" which many felt was too limiting given the valuable contributions by students, labour activists and business people in particular (who were not considered part of the "trialogue"). AWID's membership now stands at approximately 4000 individuals with over two-thirds located in the global South or Eastern Europe. AWID's efforts to expand its presence in the South have also included a different location for the 2003 Forum. For the first time ever, AWID members will meet outside of D.C. (and outside of the United States altogether) in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Going Forward

As former AWID president Aruna Rao noted in her last letter to the membership in 2001, "AWID has grown from an organization that played a convening role for practitioners, academics and policy makers based largely in North America to one that actively shapes knowledge building and networking for action around key issues of women's rights and development globally. â€œ Important gains have been made but important challenges lie ahead."

Indeed, AWID's future plans remain ambitious. Beyond delivering cutting-edge communication products to AWID's membership and hosting excellent international conferences, AWID plans to get more involved in "advocacy" in order to influence international financial and private sector institutions (as well as national governments and civil society) and to ensure that new gender sensitive ideas are translated into concrete actions in the years to come. This approach includes working with economists and human rights researchers and activists around the world in the development of viable economic alternatives, policy recommendations and/or approaches that ensure gender and economic justice.

AWID also wants to take on issues that are important but poorly understood. For example, the production of new reproductive technologies (such as a controversial anti-fertility vaccine) as well as new bio-engineered organisms (such as genetically modified foods) by corporations is raising new, but very complex, issues with regards to women's safety and bodily integrity. AWID hopes to play a leading role in naming and understanding new technologies as central concerns to the human rights of future generations.

In Guadalajara, AWID will be examining a number of future trends from global perspectives in order to be proactive and anticipate new issues and approaches. Similarly, AWID will look at how to better work across the diversities of women's movements, balance priorities, and coordinate strategies and actions within the women's rights community.

Building on its Young Women and Leadership program, AWID intends to expand its constituency of young, active AWID members. Through peer support and mentoring, our younger members

are building their capacity to understand the processes of globalization in relation to gender equality and sustainable development, to take on the AIDS epidemic and to identify better ways of organizing, to name just a few of the Young Women and Leadership theme outputs.

These new programmatic directions will entail risks and require new resources and strong alliances, along with committed leadership and good management. The future of AWID and its ability to take on an explicitly feminist, political and provocative agenda will depend on its members, its supporters and its leadership. Given the organization's proved ability to adapt and meet new challenges over the past twenty years, however, and given the commitment of its current leadership and staff, the prognosis seems bright.

"The AWID Forum has been a key gathering space over the years, to express the diversity and the harmony of women working for equality - their own, each other's, and that of all people."
- *Rieky Stuart, AWID President 1994-95*

"Of AWID I would say that it filled a huge gap, drawing together academics, practitioners and policy makers for a much-needed "dialogue" to build a new field. AWID's ability to draw participation from women all over the world made the meetings seem like mini UN conferences."
- *Jane Jaquette, AWID President, 1990-91*

"AWID has reshaped the culture and composition of its Board - it is now very international and represents the range of thinking and action on rights and development. It is a cohesive, innovative, and truly cooperative working group. AWID has also transformed from a board-led to a staff-led organization and attracted talent from all across the globe to lead and shape its programs."
- *Aruna Rao, AWID President 1997-99, 2000-01*

"AWID was having a lean period when I became president in 1990. The viability of the organization depended on the turnout for the 1990 Forum. We needed about 400 attendees to break even on expenses. We were overjoyed when about 850 people signed up. The Forum theme that year was "global empowerment for women", a somewhat radical concept at the time. The international speakers were most memorable. At least two of these courageous women had been jailed in their countries for their previous actions for women's rights. We learned from them the meaning of sacrifice for empowerment."

- *Jean Weidemann, AWID President 1989*