The Undercurrent Journal

THE CANADIAN UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

VOLUME X ISSUE II:
FALL/WINTER 2014

In this issue:

PHOTO: "SATI MEMORIAL"
MEHRANGARH FORT, JODHPUR, INDIA
BY: JESS JOHANSSON

THE Undercurrent JOURNAL

Theme: GENDER

An undercurrent, by definition, is the unseen movement of water beneath the surface; its tug and motion are only perceptible upon submersion. It is an apt metaphor both for international development studies and its undergraduates. The intriguing tensions and debates within the field of IDS flow beneath a popularized veneer of humanitarian charity. And we, its undergraduates, study at the margins of the arena of the academy – much of our vitality and dynamism hidden from view. Undercurrent is a publication that immerses its readers in the ebbs and flows of development studies through the perspective of Canadian undergraduates.

Indelibly marked by the legacy of colonialism and the onward march of global integration, international development studies is a field illuminated by our confrontation with human difference and inequality. The just pursuit of unity in diversity promises to be a reiterating challenge for the next century, and water is a fitting icon for such a pursuit: an elemental reminder of our fundamental oneness that, through its definition of our planetary geography, also preserves our distance.

With aspirations of distinction, we are proud to offer Undercurrent.

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Un undercurrent (courant de fond), par définition, est le mouvement invisible de l'eau sous la surface. Son va-et-vient est seulement apparent par submersion. Ceci est une métaphore à propos des études de développement international et des étudiants au baccalauréat. Les tensions et les débats fascinants au sein du domaine du développement international circulent sous l'aspect superficiel de la charité. De manière comparable, nous qui étudions aux marges du champ académique voyons que notre vitalité et notre dynamisme sont souvent masqués aux regards d'autrui. Undercurrent est une publication qui immerge ses lecteurs dans le flux et le reflux des études de développement international à travers la perspective d'étudiants canadiens.

Indélébilement marquées par l'héritage du colonialisme et de l'intégration mondiale actuelle, les études de développement international sont un champ éclairé par notre confrontation avec la différence humaine et l'inégalité. La poursuite judicieuse d'une unité au sein de la diversité promet d'être un défi récurrent pour le siècle à venir. L'eau est une image appropriée pour une telle quête : elle est un rappel élémentaire de notre unité fondamentale, qui, parce qu'elle définit notre géographie planétaire, préserve aussi notre distance.

Avec des ambitions de distinction, nous sommes fiers de présenter Undercurrent.

About

Undercurrent is the only student-run national undergraduate journal publishing scholarly essays and articles that explore the subject of international development. While individual authors may present distinct, critical viewpoints, Undercurrent does not harbour any particular ideological commitments. Instead, the journal aims to evince the broad range of applications for development theory and methodology and to promote interdisciplinary discourse by publishing an array of articulate, well-researched pieces. Undercurrent endeavours to raise the profile of undergraduate IDS; to establish a venue for young scholars to undergo constructive review and have work published; to provide the best examples of work currently being done in undergraduate IDS programmes in Canada; and to stimulate creative scholarship, dialogue and debate about the theory and practice of development.

undercurrentjournal.ca

Letter from the Editor

2014 is The Undercurrent's tenth birthday. Like any human being of similar age, we're starting to grow into our own right about now.

Consider that the journal is, and always has been, a nationwide online-collaborative project, driven solely by volunteer undergraduate students. Armed with no more than some email accounts and a lot of drive, more than 70 people, most of whom have never met nor heard of each other, have managed to continuously publish The Undercurrent since it launched in 2004. They often did this while obtaining full time degrees and living and working in developing countries.

And now, for the first time since it started, the journal is funded (thank you, IDRC!). InSight, the national student development studies conference that was a cornerstone of the journal, has been restarted after a four-year hiatus. The website has been overhauled; the staff has gone from 4(!) holdovers to 18 individuals filling various roles; a blog that will facilitate continuous publishing as well as the dissemination of undergraduate volunteer, work, and travel opportunities has been created. The Undercurrent has evolved from a journal into an organization.

It is with all of this in mind that I offer you the special 2014 'Gender Issue' of The Undercurrent. In it you will find some of the high-quality undergraduate

academic writing the journal has been publishing for years: analysis of the 'Gender Development Index' and 'Gender Empowerment Measure' as they apply to South Africa (Lauren Milne); discussion of trends in anti-HIV measures in India (Ali Tejpar); a look at how microfinance plays into the lives of enterprising Peruvian women (Sarah Silverberg); and an exploration of how gendered perspectives in development can actually silence minority voices (Tecla Van Bussel).

You will also find something new, however: personal reflections on international placements (Remy Bargout, Courtney Vaughan, Ashley Rerrie), and short discussions on the intersection of academia and practice (Grace Sheehy, Jennifer Lawrence).

We are also extremely proud to be carrying three pieces written by development practitioners and academics: "How the World Learned to Name Violence Against Women as a Factor in Development" by Diana Rivington; "Canada's Changing Priorities (2006-2014) and What They Mean for The Promotion of Gender Equality in Development" by Rebecca Tiessen; and "Follow the Money" by Karen Takacs. It is our hope that these pieces, when read alongside those of the undergraduate writers, will provide perspective both through their contrast, and through their similarity.

Thank you for joining us for our tenth birthday - we intend to make it something to remember.

Sincerely,

Clarke Foster
Editor-in-Chief
Undercurrent: The Canadian Undergraduate Journal of Development Studies

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How The World Learned to Name Violence Against Women as A Factor in Development

By: Diana Rivington

When I joined the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), I saw myself as a field person, best at project design and implementation. But after postings in Colombia and Honduras, a health problem meant that I needed to stay in Canada for a while so I finally agreed to work on policy issues.

When I was asked if I would take a temporary assignment to the team working on women in development in the lead up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 I said yes, little knowing that my skills and temperament were well suited to policy work and that I would develop a deeper passion for human rights the longer I worked on gender equality. I would become a “femocrat”, a word I first heard used by officials at the Filipino Commission on the Role of Women to describe a bureaucrat whose work involves the constant analysis of issues from the perspective of gender equality.

But in this note, I want to write about how a “private shame” became a “public crime” and how this changed our work on gender equality.

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed the entitlement of everyone to equality before the law and to the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of any kind and proceeds to include sex among the grounds of such impermissible distinction but made no mention of violence against women. Although other covenants also referred to equal rights, by the 1960s, it was recognized the fact of women's humanity proved insufficient to guarantee them the enjoyment of their internationally agreed rights. The UN Commission on the Status of Women called for an internationally binding treaty and during the 1970s many groups worked to develop a Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW.

This Convention was presented at a special ceremony at the Second World Conference on Women in 1980 where 64 countries signed it. CEDAW does not address violence against women as a priority except for minor provisions related to traffic in women, prostitution, and “crimes of honour”.

Domestic violence was treated as a private issue even in Canada. When in May 1982, Margaret Anne Mitchell, an NDP MP, raised the issue battered wives in the House of Commons, stating that one in ten Canadian women was subjected to spousal abuse, she was the butt of catcalls and outrageous comments (Mitchell, 2007). She later wrote:

"Before I could continue, uproar of male shouts and laughter erupted, making it impossible for me to be heard. A nearby Tory joked, 'I don't beat my wife. Do you, George?' When the Speaker finally got order, I rose again in fury. 'Madam Speaker, I do not think this is a laughing matter. What action will the minister responsible for the status of women undertake immediately at the federal level to protect battered women?'"

And women’s groups started writing to their newspapers and their MPs – because violence against women is rarely addressed without pressure from feminists and women’s groups.

This was happening elsewhere too. By 1985, at the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, women’s groups at the parallel NGO Forum were discussing violence, naming it not as a personal issue but a systemic issue. They said that women needed to call on their states to protect them, to make domestic violence a crime. The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies did have

recommendations on “abused women” and “trafficking” but it was not until the early 1990s that women really began to organize to put the issue on national and global policy agenda. At the United Nations Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, with its theme that “women’s rights are human rights”, the countries of the world discussed violence against women as a violation of human rights that ought to be treated as a crime.

Before Vienna, mainstream human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International did not treat domestic violence or rape as core issues of human rights.

So the international dialogue began changing from the 1980s to the 1990s. Violence against women became one of the areas of critical concern addressed at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Why at the Women’s Conference, why not at the UN Conference on Social Development also held in 1995? Well, it is our long experience that when women come together to discuss their priorities as women, they put the issue of violence on the table. When women are part of broader movements such as political parties or unions or environmental groups, their issues are subordinated to the larger priorities of the group – women’s issues are seen as only important to women so freedom movements want women in the streets but then tell them to go home when the revolution is won.

So by 1995, the world has the CEDAW Convention, the Vienna Declaration on Violence against Women, and the Beijing Platform for Action. What did all this meant for the femocrats within CIDA? We worked with country programmes to influence their plans and as a result, CIDA set up “Gender Equality Funds” and “Human Rights Funds” in many partner countries. These were designed to support autonomous women’s organizations, human rights organizations, and “national machineries”, that is the equivalent of Canada’s department of Status of Women and Ministries of Justice, to: 1) advocate for changes in criminal law to make rape and domestic violence a crime and to adjust related family law; 2) train judges in the interpretation of the law using CEDAW; 3) train police men and women to receive complaints under the new legislation; 4) help women’s groups in their advocacy; 5) help them set up shelters and associated support for women who move out of difficult situations. We brought officials and activists from partner countries to tour and meet with officials, police, judges, activists, and shelter workers in Canada and we sent Canadians to Paraguay and the Philippines and many other places to share our lessons learned.

Despite the glacial process of international negotiation, an internationally agreed document such as the CEDAW Convention or the Beijing Platform for Action can be a lever for changes. These documents act as a compass to guide governments and ministers to monitor whether their departments or countries are on or off track. Governments are expected to report on progress to the UN. United Nations agencies such as the UNDP and UN Women produce report cards that provide comparative data – certainly it was useful for me and my colleagues to say that if Canada wanted to be in the same category as Sweden or the Netherlands, we needed to up our game.

Human rights scholars and feminist activists argue that there is a tipping point after which international norms begin to cascade – indeed, the literature seems to indicate that when about a third of countries adapt a norm such as making domestic violence a criminal act it becomes “the thing to do” for most other countries. This makes me hopeful.

From before the Trojan War till late in the last century, violence against women in its multiple forms – whether wife-beating, rape, dowry-burning or female genital cutting – was calmly accepted, viewed either as private misfortunes or as feudal cultural practices, rather than as evidence of the unacceptable oppression and denial of the human rights of one half of the human race. Today, every society is forced to address these forms of violence, even if both Iran and the Vatican plead that their religious dogmas outrank any discussion of equality for women.

Working to reduce violence is never easy. It will mean serious analysis of the local social and cultural context, finding the levers for dialogue and change, and addressing impunity. There will be few immediate rewards – this is not administering vitamin A tablets, easy to measure over a short term. But it is a meaningful investment in the world you want to see and in reducing the intergenerational transmission of poverty and pain.

So for those of you who want to work in international development, remember that VAW is a factor, whether visible or hidden, in any development work: name it, shame it, and work to change it.

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Internship Failure Report: Gender Equality and The Use of Agency

By: Remy Bargout

Abstract - This is an opinion piece that recounts the gender based experiences and perspectives of an undergraduate student participating in a six month CIDA funded internship in South India. The author had been living and working with three other interns in a rural mountainous area of Tamil Nadu. The interns collaborated with a well-known local NGO working in the sector of rural agricultural development. They experienced a foreseeable number of obstacles in their work as researchers in a foreign place, and had to cross a number of barriers. Some of these challenges were gender related and, for the writer, it was found that gender barriers were the most precarious ones to cross. Actually, from the perspective that the writer of this article was the only male intern. He found himself in awkward situations, not knowing what to do, caught between the need for cultural sensitivity and the simple requirement of common human decency and respect towards people. In this case, the simple requirement that the host organization offer the same amount respect to the other interns as they did to him, for the sole and unfortunate reason that he was a white male.

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2013, I was part of a CIDA funded internship in South India for six months. I lived and worked with three other interns in the city of Chennai. The program was organized by Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI) and funded by CIDA's 2013-2014 International Youth Internship Program. We collaborated with a well-known local NGO working on rural agricultural development, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF). We experienced a foreseeable number of obstacles in our work as researchers, and we crossed a number of these barriers. Many of these challenges were gender related. Personally, I found that gender barriers were the most precarious ones to cross. For me, the reason was because I was the only male intern. I found myself in awkward situations, not knowing what to do. I experienced how the host organization respected me more than the other interns, simply for being a male. Working in a country with an abundant supply of patriarchal baggage, I found it challenging to be the only male intern.

PATRIARCHY AND THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT REGIME

Christine Lagarde, the first woman to be the finance minister of a G8 country and the first woman to head the International Monetary fund, was interviewed about her professional experiences as a woman. She asserted that women make better leaders than men in crisis situations. She attributes this to the differences that exist between masculine and feminine styles of leadership, citing studies that demonstrate how certain traits are more predominant among women, such as listening skills, the ability to form consensus, and attention to risk. While men are often more willing to take risks, women seem better at evaluating the viability of risk and managing the outcomes (Ignatius, 2013). Was Lagarde saying that women are better suited than men for international development work? Whether or not this is true, it is one of many difficult questions to address when discussing gender and international development.

Do patriarchal structures exclude women from having a role within the international development regime? They certainly do (Chowdry, 2003; De Beauvoir, 1949; Hirsham, 2003). However, we have made progress towards breaking down these structures: towards emphasizing the important role women play in the development process at the grassroots and the institutional level. Focusing on the institutional level, it would be disheartening and incorrect to say we have made no progress whatsoever (Kabeer, 1994; Karl, 1995; Rathgeber, 1990; Stuadt, 2002). Certainly, though, there is vast room for improvement. Consider that it was only four years ago the United Nations General Assembly finally created an entity dedicated solely to gender equality and the empowerment of women (UN Women, 2011). This is a great step forward but it does not guarantee gender equality, or effectively dismantle patriarchal structures.

From my internship experience – at the institutional level – I think it is an individual's agency that can build equality and breakdown patriarchal structures.

Sheryl Sandberg is Facebook's Chief Operating Officer. She has written some controversial ideas on women 'Leaning In' to leadership roles at institutional levels. Theorists and critics might accuse the Lean In movement of encouraging male expropriation of female labour (Hartmann, 1976), or for offering a narrow neo-liberal view of gender equality (Hooks, 2013). However, her book has sold over a million copies. Sandberg has practically run Facebook for over twenty years and was one of the 2012 *Time Magazine* 100 most influential people – her perspective is part of the discourse. She explains how there is a thin veneer between the perception/promise of equality, and a concerted genuine effort to realize true equality. Women have to work much harder to prove themselves in the work place than men do, she says. Sandberg cites McKinsey studies on how men are frequently promoted based on their potential, whereas women are promoted based on their past accomplishments (Sandberg, 2013). Her concept of 'leaning in' encourages women to unilaterally place themselves in positions of power. She proposes that when we see more female voices speaking from positions of power there will be more honest and equitable opportunities created for everyone, women and men alike (Sandberg, 2013). In many ways, Sandberg alludes to the idea that individual agency has the power/potential to achieve gender equality (Lois, 2000; 2004).

GENDER INEQUALITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT REGIME: INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES

As part of the Bringing Youth into Development program, the Shastri Indo-Candian Institute (SICI) divided the twenty interns groups between four and six, and we were assigned to work with NGOs in four different major cities: Delhi, Chandigarh, Bangalore, and Chennai. I was the only male assigned to Chennai. I would not have predicted that being the only male intern was going to be a particular challenge, or that it would create so many barriers.

During my university career, and other work/volunteer experiences, I collaborated successfully in groups/teams of mostly women where, in some cases, I was also the only male. Gender demographics of the University of Guelph's student population reflect a high female to male ratio (CUDO, 2012), much like the gender demographics of any other post-secondary institution in Canada today (Church, 2009; Church, 2011). I think it was the cross-cultural context of working in South India that made these gender barriers, as much as they were, unexpected.

The barriers are difficult for me to explain, and I am somewhat hesitant to speak on these barriers – perhaps it is because the other interns experienced them more negatively than I did. Nonetheless, being the only male, I was treated differently by the host organization. From my perspective, I was treated with more respect than the other interns. It is hard for me to describe the nuances of everything we experienced collectively: indeed, patriarchy itself is subversive in the many subtle and well hidden tools it uses (Brown, 1994; Gottfried, 1998). However, I can recount some basic examples that might best demonstrate the reason for my perspective.

During meetings at the main office in Chennai, our supervisor aimed a lot of his conversation towards me, and did not address the other interns as frequently. I do not know why he did so – personally I think it would have been awkward to ask him why – but this was something I frequently observed. By no means was I the most qualified, intelligible, or organized of the four of us. If anything, I was the most disorganized. It felt as if I had been designated a certain power that the other three interns did not have the privilege to. I cannot help but believe it was on the basis of gender.

There are similar stories from when we were doing fieldwork. Our work was research oriented and involved stints of fieldwork in a rural mountainous area of Tamil Nadu, using Public Rural Appraisal tools and focus group discussions. We worked closely with the MSSRF field staff, most of whom were men. Typically, the staff act as extension agents at the grassroots level, working directly with small-scale

farmers – they were our partners and interpreters during the fieldwork. The staff were well intentioned, but seemed far more professional in their conduct with me. At times, I observed them to be condescending towards the other interns. I often experienced immunity, whereas the other interns seemed more likely to be contradicted or criticized in their work.

It seemed like the interns were given *even less* respect if I was not around. There is one particular example that comes to mind, when I had to leave the field for a week because of visa problems. I was in Chennai, trying to complete paper work at the Foreign Regional Registration Office. I called the interns in the middle of the week to ask how things were going. What they told me was surprising, and unfortunate. The field staff seemed to be treating the interns worse when I was not with the group. It was normal for us to experience one to two hour delays in our daily work plan. However, on the phone I heard stories of the staff showing up as much as three to four hours late. Apparently, there had been problem with a staff member yelling at one of the interns. There was also an issue with the driver. He had been trying to pressure the interns into paying him more money than the original amount we negotiated. Unfortunately, I question whether or not these events would have occurred if I, or any other male intern, had been working in the field that week. It was unfortunate – even ironic – that gender equality was not fully upheld in the fabric of an institution that advocated for gender equality at the grassroots level.

There are three crosscutting themes integrated into every Canadian international development program and policy, and one of them is “advancing equality between women and men” (DFATD, 2011). Certainly, in the communities where we were researching, we saw vast disparities in gender equality. Often women are left to do most of the household work, along with additional work on the farmland. As a result, maternal and child health can suffer (IDRC, 2013; Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 2006; Paul-Bossuet, 2013). Development organizations, both international and local, have come to adopt the cause of female empowerment and gender equality, because of the particular benefit this can have towards poverty reduction (Blackden, 1999; Kabeer, 2005). The cause of gender equality, however, must be also adopted within the organizational/institutional fabric of the development regime itself.

AGENCY, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT REGIME: INTERNSHIP FAILURES

What happened in the end? Did anything change? Yes. I chose to make a big change before the final six weeks of the internship. I decided to quit the entire program, and I left India. There are various reasons why the internship was unsuccessful and the issue of gender was one of many. There were many administrative failures on the part of MSSRF, SICI, and CIDA, which contributed to my frustration. Gender related issues made the experience more challenging and frustrating than it already was.

The internship experience offered me frequent frustration and confusion from the perspective of gender equality. It was awkward to be treated with more respect than the other interns on the basis of gender. It was frustrating to personally experience how patriarchal tendencies can be perpetuated. At times, under the circumstance of being the only male intern, I deceived myself into believing I was somehow ‘responsible’ for the other interns. I found myself thinking that gender related barriers might have been easier for me to cross if there had been another male intern. All of these notions were inaccurate. Amidst all the confusion, the internship experience was most frustrating because I experienced powerlessness in the general context of things.

I was powerless in this situation because I was conflicted between the importance of gender equality and the importance of cultural sensitivity. A change in societal and cultural norms is often part and parcel of any change in societal gender relations (Stromquist, 2002). However, there is so much patriarchal baggage that Indian society needs to address on its own, and that will hopefully lead to greater equality between female and male professionals working in the Indian development/non-profit sector (Krishnaraj, 2012; Malhotra, Vanneman, & Kishor; 1995; Sudhir, 1978; Tichy, Becker, & Sisco, 2009). It was not within my right or my ability to begin confronting the societal origins of the gender

related power imbalances we experienced at the host institution; this was a cross-cultural issue too great for me to even understand over the course of a mere six-month internship. However, was I justified in feeling powerless? Did I truly feel powerless? Is anyone truly removed of his or her agency in such a situation? The answer is no, and it was a failure for me to think that it was.

I want to reiterate that gender barriers were not the primary reason why I opted to leave the internship – there was a long list of administrative problems. Nevertheless, the gender imbalance was still frustrating given that in the cross-cultural context the gender barriers were precarious to cross, and gender related challenges still represent a contributing factor to the way I chose to use agency. I want to go back to the idea of individual agency, and the ability of agency to breakdown patriarchal structures and build gender equality (Billett, 2006; Eisenhardt, 1989; Lois, 2000; 2004; Sandberg, 2003). From the perspective of gender, it is interesting to reflect on how I chose to use agency in deciding to leave the internship. Was this an effective/responsible way for me to use agency? How did my use of agency impact gender equality within the internship program?

The idea of agency explains how 'individuals behave in the ways that they do because, otherwise, they would be contradicting their personal sense of being' (Lois, 2000). This raises an important question, "Can there be agency without a centered self?" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995). The answer is yes, there can be. Agency can be used in creative and diverse ways, sometimes incorporating self-imposed constraints, with the aim of greater social goals (Lois, 2000). In this regard, there exists a difference between social and individual agency (Billett, 2006). Individuals are able to construct different 'subjectively meaningful selves' to benefit themselves, and to benefit others as well. The 'self' is becoming an increasingly diverse projection from our daily life (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995).
Within the development community, there is a novel idea about the benefits of openly admitting failure, and how organizations can become more effective and more transparent by annually reporting their failures (Bunting, 2011; Edmondson, 2011; Engineers Without Borders, 2014). In my opinion, it is not uncommon to hear that CIDA funded internships are unsuccessful and fail to provide the interns with a beneficial working experience. Admitting to a long list of administrative failures is not my responsibility as one of the program beneficiaries; that is the responsibility of MSSRF, SICI, and CIDA. However, I can report my personal failures from the internship, concerning the issue of gender equality and my use of agency.

CONCLUSION

I have had enough time to reflect on my internship experience: on the lessons I learned, and the opportunities foregone. Reflecting on the story of my internship from a gender perspective, and the information I have offered to support my narrative, I have at least one failure to report. I think by choosing to quit the internship, I exercised agency in a predominantly contractual way. From a contractual perspective I was justified in leaving the internship due to the many administrative shortcomings on promised deliverables. From the social and gender perspective, however, I exercised agency in a way that lacked creativity and diversity. I should have exercised my agency more creatively, more diversely, and in a more social sense. I should have diversified myself, and stayed through the entire program. If not to see things through to the end, at least, out of respect for the other people I was interning with.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge his fellow interns, Mitalie Makhani (Univeristy of Toronto), Dawn Cordeiro (University of Guelph) and Gonee Saini (University of British Columbia). The author would like to thank the Canadian International Development Agency, Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute and M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, respectively, for funding, organizing and hosting the internship.

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Follow The Money

By: Karen Takacs

Last month at the World Economic Forum, Erna Solberg, the Prime Minister of Norway declared, "When you invest in a girl`s education, she feeds herself, her children, her community and her nation." This is not the first time that a call for greater investment in women and girls has been made at Davos. Lately it seems that everyone is talking about the importance of investing in women and girls, from the elites at Davos to Dove and Nike. However, even though everyone is talking about women and girls, very little funding is actually going to women and girls. According to the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)'s latest FundHer Report, "Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots, " one of the striking paradoxes of this moment is that the spotlight on women and girls seems to have had little impact on improving the funding situation of a large majority of women's organizations around the world. The median annual income of the 740 women's organizations that responded to the FundHer survey was a paltry $20,000 U.S., and the 2010 combined income of these 740 organizations amounted to $106 million U.S. – one third of Greenpeace Worldwide's annual budget of $309 million and less than 7% of Save the Children's International's global budget of 1,44 billion.[1]

These days I can't seem to walk anywhere in downtown Toronto without seeing a *Because I am a Girl* or a *CARE I am Powerful* poster on some hoarding somewhere. From INGOs to the private sector to multilateral institutions (the IMF also recently released a report on Women, Work and the Economy), women and girls seem to be a priority, so why has this not translated into more stable funding for women's organizations? Well thanks to AWID's *Where is the Money for Women's Rights* Initiative launched in 2005, we are beginning to get a clearer picture. Part of the challenge lies with the language of investment, which tends to favour short-term measurable projects and service delivery. As a result very little of what is being allocated to women's rights organizations is core funding; 48% of respondents to AWID's survey reported never having received core funding and 52% reported never having received multi-year funding.[2] Organizations are more precarious than ever, which we know to be true from our own work with very credible partners on the ground, who all seem to be scrambling for fewer and fewer resources.

There may be more money available to address the needs of women and girls but less of it is going to women's organizations. AWID found that "There is an ever increasing interest in women and girls as a priority - at least a rhetorical one - in nearly every funding sector. Vast resources are becoming available under the broad umbrella of 'development' and trends like "investing in women and girls" are increasingly heralded as a keystone strategy for women's economic empowerment, and indeed, for broader development and economic growth."[3] As a result, some civil society actors (INGOs) are expanding their own work with women and girls, opening up their own offices and competing with and in some cases displacing local women's organizations. This is one of the downsides of gender mainstreaming, as I see it – anyone can provide services to women and girls but not necessarily from a rights based perspective. The problem is that while there may be more micro loans available to women, for example, women remain subjects and are not necessarily supported to become actors and advocates in their own right. Interestingly, AWID surveys show a significant drop in the share of income that women's organizations report from international NGOs (INGOs), down from 14% in 2005 to 7% in 2010.[4]

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[1] Available at http://www.awid.org/Library/Watering-the-Leaves-Full-Report, p. 16

[2] IBID, p. 17.

[3] IBID, p. 17.

[4] Ibid p. 19.

The 'leaves'—individual women and girls—are receiving growing attention without support for 'the roots' - the sustained, collective action by feminists and women's rights activists and organizations that has been at the centre of women's rights advances throughout history."[5]
So what does this look like in Canada? Last year a group of us, NGO leaders, gender specialists and activists got together and decided to explore the funding landscape in Canada. Inspired by AWID's research, we set out to look at three areas: how Canadian International development CSOs support women and girls; trends in Canadian Foundations' international granting; and trends in funding for gender equality programs by DFATD, formerly known as CIDA. Our report, *Digging Deeper: Towards Greater Action on Rights for Women and Girls*, will be released shortly.
So what did we find?

Civil Society Organizations

- Over the last 20 years Canadian CSOs have made progress in integrating gender equality into their programs and 58% allocate funds to programs specifically for women and girls – although 42% do not
- Programs directed specifically to women and girls focus more on basic service delivery than on support for women's rights programming.
- The largest organizations, those with program budgets over 30 million, allocate less than 7% of their overseas budget to support autonomous women's organizations; among smaller organizations, the figure rises to approximately 13%. [6]

Foundations

- Although foundations are a growing part of the charitable sector, this has not translated into a significant increase in the size and number of international grants.
- Of the 20 largest Canadian Foundations (by asset size), only 8 made any international grants in 2011
- Grants supporting international development made up less than 1% of all foundation grants in 2011.[7]

DFATD (formerly known as CIDA)

- CIDA spending where gender equality is the primary goal has been 1 -2% of total program spending over the last five years- overall CIDA devotes little funding to women's equality organizations [8]

These trends are in line with AWID's findings. Sadly there is much more to be done on all fronts in Canada, among CSOs, with foundations and with our government. As NGO leaders we are constantly scrambling to raise funding for our own organizations. And this has become even more difficult, in a context of greater competition and increasingly precarious government support. We all face pressure from our Boards and donors who tend to measure our progress in terms of our own organizational growth, but if we really want to contribute to women's equality shouldn't we be measuring our success based on other markers? For example do women and girls have greater agency and voice as a result of our work? Are women continuing to be the subjects of our work or are they being supported to be actors in their own right? And do they have the resources to sustain their work? I am not suggesting that this is easy. There is a lot of work to do, to not only educate our boards and donors and ensure that more CSOs are supporting independent women's organizations and at minimum that we are all monitoring our progress in this area. This goes to the heart of our work and begs the question about the role of northern NGOs in international development today. Should we be growing our own capacity to deliver direct services to local communities or strengthen the capacity of local CSOs on the ground? There are

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[5] Ibid p. 17.

[6] Plewes, Betty *Digging Deeper: Towards Greater Action on Rights for Women and Girls, 2013, p. 7*

[7] Ibid

[8] Ibid , p. 8

no easy answers here, but shouldn't we at least be asking the questions. If we really want to achieve our missions, we must begin to look beyond our own organizational interests and work with others. As Plewes notes, "The time is right for a large-scale Canadian collaborative initiative in support of women's rights, which includes joint –programming, fundraising and awareness building, and which draws on the interest of women philanthropists, CSOs, government and foundations."

Encouraging Gendered Perspectives in Community Engagement and Urban Planning

By: Jennifer Lawrence

Who is the city built for? Whose needs does urban planning and design accommodate? When exploring the relationship between gender and space feminist geographers, urban planners, and political activists have sought to conceptualize the impact of urban planning on the lives of women. This presents an interesting and important topic of discussion when we consider the fact that urban centers continue to grow throughout the world. In diverse and ever-growing cities, understanding our relationship to our environment and the manner in which it shapes our lives is vital to the development of community and social well-being.

When governments and other decision makers chose to consult citizens on city development or policy development, they use one or several different forms of public consultation (PC) and community engagement (CE). Thus when I use the terms PC or CE here, I am referring to the methods by which governing bodies seek out, collect, and assess public opinion on policy issues (Abelson et al., 2007).

Last year I had the opportunity to attend a community forum discussing the mechanisms, ideologies, and barriers that are frequently present in PC and CE. During the forum, I chose to participate in a workshop that would investigate methods for developing city spaces in order to optimize the mental wellbeing of local citizens. While discussing the importance of safe neighbourhoods and open parks it dawned on me that these issues have a great impact on the lives and mental health of women in communities.

How might a woman feel about her importance to her community or city if she is in danger when walking home at night? How many women feel they have to remain cautious when they are walking through parks, markets, or neighbourhoods in broad daylight? If a single mother can only afford low income housing but she does not feel safe with her children in her own home, what message does that send to her and her children about their social place in their city? Do they have a right to their own security? How much does the availability of safe and time efficient public transportation affect these women's everyday travel decisions or even employment opportunities (Skotnitsky & Ferguson, 2005)? A feeling of safety, security, and community are important for maintaining good mental health. Therefore, these questions should be central to the process of responding to women's needs.

In the course of our discussion it became clear to me that gendered perspectives are an important aspect of urban development. However administrators and planners of CE and PC frequently express frustration at the difficulty of engaging women in PC and CE (Zakus & Lysack, 1998). This is due in large part to the excess of daily demands on such vulnerable groups: work, childcare, transportation, etc. are all factors which might influence an individual's ability to attend a PC or CE event (King, Feltey, and Susel, 1998). There is also a certain level of distrust demonstrated by these groups toward administrators and decision makers. This is a symptom of democratic deficit and an alienation of citizens towards governing bodies who are thought to be manipulative, greedy, and self-interested (Bishop & Davis, 2002).

So how might we increase the participation of women in PC? Recommendations have included conducting events in an area close to the community (King et al., 1998), creating multiple events with different times, reimbursing participants for childcare or providing childcare, providing food to participants, and ensuring transport is easily available (Skotnitsky & Ferguson, 2005).

However, the first and most important step for administrators and community leaders may very well be to develop a more trusting relationship with the community being consulted (McGee, 2000). To this end, scholars have recommended a few key strategies such as increasing the influence of PC on final decisions (McGee, 2000), including a level of flexibility and participant input when planning PC, improving communication of contextual information (Veenstra, 2002), goals, expectations, and decisions (Zakus & Lysack, 1998), as well as maintaining a certain level of participant involvement throughout the decision making process. I am currently undertaking a community based research project to investigate the potential benefit of using these strategies for PC and CE undertaken in Peterborough, Ontario.

Developing new strategies and methodology in partnership with academic research would provide greater opportunities for engaging women in PC and CE. These techniques would hopefully provide a chance for the gendered lens on urban and community development to grow. At the same time, participation in PC and CE has the potential to contribute to a participant's skill set (Beierle, 1999), enhancing their ability to perceive and assess planning issues, to mobilize support, and to direct campaigns effectively towards the right decision makers (Gastil, 2000). Thus increasing efforts to involve women in PC and CE is not just an issue of responding to women's needs, but also an issue of empowering them to express their opinions in a public forum.

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HIV Prevention Through Empowerment: An Assessment of The Shifting Trends in Anti-HIV Frameworks and Program Priorities of Health Interventions in Indian Female Sex Worker (FSW) Communities From 1992 Onwards

By: Ali Tejpar

Abstract: As a population segment highly vulnerable to HIV infection, Indian female sex workers (FSWs) represent a demographic that has been targeted through numerous health interventions. As such, four various development endeavours and the shifting trends in their HIV-prevention frameworks are assessed chronologically. The Sonagachi Project of 1992 framed HIV prevention in terms of worker and women's rights. This endeavour sought to empower FSWs through peer education to increase HIV awareness and establish social support networks. The National AIDS Control Programme of the same year was contrastingly focused on providing access to social and health resources such as condom promotion and antiretroviral therapy. However, research conducted in FSW communities have emphasized that condom promotion efforts have limited success given the structural inabilities of FSWs to negotiate condom use with male stakeholders. The third intervention, the Aastha project of 2004 – implemented by Family Health International, thereby focused on facilitating collective mobilization against oppressive stakeholders for over 20,000 FSWs throughout the targeted region. The final project, the Avahan initiative of 2010 – funded by the Gates Foundation, accordingly sought to address the need to empower FSWs through improving their advocacy and negotiation skills with clients, while also enhancing their access to social and health resources. Through an assessment of the shifting priorities of anti-HIV efforts in FSW communities, it has become increasingly evident that recent endeavours to incorporate access to health and social resources in addition to collective and individual empowerment strategies have provided effective and sustainable solutions in reducing HIV risks. Challenges however remain in achieving comprehensive HIV interventions through including male stakeholders in project planning and implementation.

INTRODUCTION

As a state with a significant population living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), India is a country whose "burden of infection makes tackling the HIV epidemic...a [national and international] health priority" (Blanchard et al. 2013:2). Within the estimated population of two and half million people living with HIV, the Indian National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) has identified female sex workers (FSWs) as a specific high-risk group for HIV infection and transmission (Blanchard et al. 2013:2; Karandikar and Gezinski 2013:113). Accordingly, targeted health interventions in female sex worker communities is considered to be essential by national policymakers and health experts to stemming the spread of the virus (Blanchard et al. 2013:2; Prinja et al. 2011:354). Despite the "expanding arsenal of individual level HIV prevention technologies" – such as antiretroviral treatments and pre/post-exposure prophylaxis – there is substantial evidence that community-level empowerment interventions are fundamental to facilitating long-term prevention efforts (Ibid). Such methods aim to foster safe-sex behaviours, increase health education, and facilitate access to HIV-prevention/treatment resources as a means of combating the epidemic (Ibid). Female sex workers comprise a population segment at the greatest risk of HIV infection as a result of "gender-based marginalization, exacerbated by poverty and caste/class/ethnicity-based discrimination" (Swendeman et al. 2009:1158). This results in higher-risk sex work due to a structural lack of power and agency to negotiate with clients (Ibid). In this regard, a number of community-based interventions among female sex workers (FSWs) in India have been implemented in efforts to empower these groups via sexual health education, collective rights bargaining, and the facilitation of access to HIV treatment resources.

Through a chronological evaluation of four specific anti-HIV empowerment initiatives in Indian FSW communities from 1992 onwards, this paper will explore the trends in program priorities and the anti-HIV frameworks used in these approaches. These four initiatives have been chosen based on their reflection of national evolutions in anti-HIV agendas and strategies relating to FSWs. Within the context of this paper, empowerment is conceptualized as interventions and processes with positive impacts on measured variables "linked to program goals to reduce vulnerability to HIV/STDs using...effective HIV/STD prevention frameworks" (Swendeman et al. 2009:1158). Furthermore, empowerment initiatives focus development efforts on improving both the agency and status of women to give them the tools to overcome structural susceptibilities to infection (Ibid). Based on the current literature and analyses of projects thus far, this paper will address how recent endeavours have adopted measures to empower Indian FSWs through enhancing their advocacy and negotiation skills. Subsequent improvements in FSWs' levels of self-esteem, confidence, and efficacy have thus resulted in stronger abilities to demand condom use with clients as well as engage in collective bargaining for social support (Blanchard et al. 2013:11). Accordingly, this shifting focus on both collective and individual empowerment of FSWs, in addition to the provision of health and social resources, will be argued to constitute a more sustainable and long-term approach to reducing HIV risks through providing effective negotiation skills training.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first intervention to be outlined is the Sonagachi Project, conducted in 1992, which framed HIV prevention in terms of worker and women's rights for FSWs (Swendeman et al. 2009:1165). In the same year, the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) alternatively framed the issue as one that could be addressed through peer-led behaviour changes to encourage safer sex practices, condom promotion, and easier access to health resources (Prinja et al. 2011:354). Responses to this study reported that the promotion of condom use did not adequately address the systemic inability of FSWs to insist on condom use with clients (Bharat et al. 2013:3). Subsequent recommendations thereby underscored "the need to build FSWs' persuasive powers and their skills in negotiating condom use" – persuasion being understood as "the art of convincing the client on the benefits of condom use for safeguarding him, his spouse and children from sexual infections" (Ibid:6). Even so, HIV prevention efforts shifted from targeting individual risk behaviour change to community-based empowerment approaches (Gaikwad et al. 2012:69). This resulted from the "growing awareness of the complex social, cultural, political, and economic forces shaping the HIV epidemic" (Ibid). The Aastha Programme, delivered in 2004, resultantly focused on participatory action. This was achieved through forming FSW self-help advocacy groups to address police and state abuse while securing social services such as ration and voter identity cards (Punyam et al. 2012:92). Findings of this study indicated that FSW collectivization increased confidence in "standing up to the police and troublesome stakeholders", thus providing a more comprehensive approach to HIV prevention than focusing solely on risk behaviour changes (Gaikwad et al. 2012:76). The final study to be discussed, implemented in 2010 as part of Avahan – the Indian AIDS initiatives of the Gates Foundation, focused on community mobilization, while additionally providing training through focus groups to enhance FSWs' efficacy, self-esteem, and abilities to negotiate safer sex practices with clients (Blanchard et al. 2013:11). This integrated framework to incorporate community and individual empowerment, in addition to the provision of health and social resources, has been reported to "improve self-efficacy for condom use and service utilization, and actual condom use and service utilization" (Ibid). In essence, the progressive shifts in intervention strategies and anti-HIV frameworks have thereby reflected the evolving understandings of the needs and obstacles self-identified by Indian FSWs.

Nevertheless, Indian female sex workers continually face a number of structural barriers in regards to HIV prevention efforts. Given the highly stigmatized nature of their work, FSWs face abject levels of discrimination within society (Bharat et al. 2013:1). Violence and abuse are daily occurrences by "intimate partners, brothel owners, pimps and middle-men, and the police" (Ibid). As a result of socioeconomic marginalization, disempowerment, and high levels of vulnerability, FSWs are particularly susceptible to HIV transmission (Yadav et al. 2013:1). Indian FSWs' vulnerability to HIV is further exacerbated as a result of prevalent intravenous drug use, "early age initiation of sex", human trafficking,

and alcohol abuse (Medhi et al. 2012:371; Silverman et al. 2011:1230). Living conditions, particularly in urban settings such as Mumbai, are deplorable for women involved in sex work with "basic requirements of food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, and health care facilities sparsely unavailable" (Karandikar and Gezinski 2013:113). Sexual violence, often as a result of clients' demands for sex without a condom, is a common occurrence in the lives of FSWs, which commonly increases the "likelihood for lacerations and vaginal trauma" (Reed et al. 2009:10). As a result of such significant levels of sexual, physical, and structural violence, FSWs have adopted coping strategies to minimize "hurt and expenses and maximizing safety and savings" through "working longer hours, borrowing money..., offering sex for lower prices without condoms, etc." – activities associated with high risk behaviours in contracting HIV (Karandikar and Gezinski 2013:113). To address these issues, development interventions have varied their focuses from safe sex behaviour promotion, to the provision of health services, to individual and community mobilization and empowerment.

THE SONAGACHI PROJECT, 1992

Given that the consistent use of condoms by FSWs is associated with financial losses "estimated around 70% compared to less consistent condom users", intervention programmes thereby face an uphill battle in promoting safe sex behaviours (Swendeman et al. 2009:1159). With this in mind, the Sonagachi Project began as a result of a locally-led appraisal of STD/HIV risk in Kolkata's largest red-light district by the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health in 1991 (Ibid). National health care professionals were able to gain access to sex workers by speaking with local stakeholders such as police, politicians, and brothel owners and framing the intervention as an effort to prevent HIV "threats to the livelihoods and health of the whole community" (Ibid).

The subsequent intervention in 1992 sought to empower FSWs through hiring and training local sex workers as peer educators, "condom social marketers" and progressively as leaders and program administrators (Ibid). The success of the Sonagachi Project evolved as a result of its focus on empowerment and the mobilization of various financial resources (e.g., the World Health Organization, the UK Department for International Development, the Gates Foundation, the [Indian] government) "to build a social movement of more than 60,000 sex workers...to over 60 communities in West Bengal" (Ibid:1157). Studies detail the Sonagachi Project's effective empowerment framework through the establishment of a number of goals:

> 1) provide a frame to motivate change; 2) increase knowledge of risk and protective factors; 3) build cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills; 4) reduce environmental barriers to change; and 5) build ongoing social support to sustain change over time (Swendeman et al. 2009:1158).

Sonagachi-modeled interventions accordingly indicated a 39 percent increase in condom use rates by FSWs over a sixteen month project, "compared to standard care control (11%)" (Ibid). By framing HIV issues in FSW communities as a worker and women's rights movement, the Sonagachi Project was able to improve knowledge and condom use, provide a reorientation of sex work as a valid occupation, and facilitate the creation of social support networks to increase group savings and other sources of income for older FSWs (Ibid). This particular intervention strategy would serve as a foundational model for further mentioned programmes focused on empowerment through both collective and individual mobilization.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL AIDS CONTROL PROGRAMME (NACP), 1992

During the same year, the Indian government launched the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) with the goal of HIV prevention through peer-led counselling, condom promotion, quarterly health check-ups for sexually transmitted infection treatments, and access to antiretroviral therapy" (Prinja et al. 2011:354). With over 1,200 NACP projects in FSW communities across the country, government reports indicated overall improvements in the reduction of national HIV prevalence among sex workers through both structural and behavioral interventions (Bharat et al. 2013:1). The NACP interventions thereby framed the issue in terms of increasing promotion and access to social and health

resources. However, ensuing studies highlighted that condom promotion was only as effective as the abilities of FSWs to insist on condom use with clients (Bharat et al. 2013:2). Moreover, research on Indian FSWs report that "FSWs in general lack the skills, ability, and power to negotiate condom use with clients" (Ibid). National agendas on the HIV epidemic thereby emphasized three key issues to address in FSW communities:

> a) are FSWs able to bring condom use into the picture/discuss condom use when they meet clients, b) are FSWs able to stand their ground/insist on condom use when clients refuse to use condoms, particularly if they are offered additional payment, and c) are FSWs able to convince unwilling clients to use condoms? (Ibid:2).

These priorities are further emphasized with research findings that nearly one-third of FSWs use condoms inconsistently, if at all (Bharat et al. 2013:2). The need for negotiation skills training was conceptualized through having FSWs increase their abilities to: ask clients to use a condom, refuse to have sex if the client chooses not to use a condom, "refusing to have sex for more money if a client is not willing to use a condom", and negotiating condom use with an unwilling client (Barat et al. 2013:2). While the NACP interventions facilitated access to health and social resources, it highlighted the need for advocacy and negotiation skills training for FSWs as priorities for future endeavours.

THE AASTHA PROJECT, 2004

The third intervention to be discussed is the Aastha project, implemented in 2004 by Family Health International, in two districts of Maharashtra in Thane and Mumbai – regions characterized by high levels of HIV prevalence and large populations of FSWs (Gaikwad et al. 2012:69). Based on the understanding of structural barriers faced by these communities, Aastha sought to promote collective mobilization training for over 20,000 FSWs working in brothels, bars, in the streets, and in homes (Ibid: 70). Reports detail the vast levels of structural violence in that almost all brothel-keepers receive a "50% share of the FSWs' earnings" and exercise control over FSWs' condom usage with clients (Ibid). Contrastingly, street-based FSWs, who belong to lowest socioeconomic threshold, often fall at the "mercy of pimps, local goons and the police, who are the main perpetrators of violence" (Ibid). Home-based FSWs, alternatively, "solicit clients through a phone network of pimps" and thus constitute a difficult-to-reach population (Ibid).

The Aastha project thereby organized a project team of sex workers and peer educators to facilitate the creation of self-help groups called Aastha Gats (AGs) throughout the targeted region (Gaikwad et al. 2012:69). These groups came together to focus on building FSWs' collective capacity for decision making, leadership, crisis management, problem solving, and the organization of mass rallies (Ibid). Of the sample of over 20,000 FSWs in the study, roughly 71.3 percent reported improvements in "medium and high collective efficacy for achieving goals" (Ibid:73). Collectivization thereby resulted in the enhanced confidence and self-esteem needed to "stand up to power structures, including brothel keepers, the police and brokers" (Gaikwad et al. 2012:76). Surveys conducted during the project describe how, prior to the intervention, FSWs did not have strong social support networks with each other and engaged in rivalries for territory and clients (Ibid). Following the facilitation of focus groups, FSWs discussed the creation of forums to address commonly faced issues and develop strategies to collectively work together to support one another (Ibid). One emerging trend was the phenomenon of individual FSWs more actively insisting on condom use with clients or resisting violent confrontation "with the belief that the larger group would intervene if needed" (Gaikwad et al. 2012:73).

THE AVAHAN INITIATIVE, 2010

Through organized action, FSWs are better equipped to tackle the "complex social, cultural, political, and economic vulnerabilities faced by marginalized population groups most at risk of acquiring HIV infection" (Punyam et al. 2012:87). By means of collective mobilization against state stakeholders, FSWs were able to gain access to public entitlements including bank accounts, ration cards, and

ownership of land for housing (Ibid). Overall, project analysis of anti-HIV endeavours describe how "involving FSWs directly in organizational activities and empowerment strategies reduces their vulnerability to HIV/STIs as compared with programmes that provide only clinical and prevention services" (Gaikwad et al. 2012:69). The explicit need for initiatives to train FSWs in advocacy and negotiation skills with clients was however addressed with the implementation of Avahan, the Indian AIDS project of the Gates Foundation in 2010 (Blanchard et al. 2013:2). Through the delivery of health programs in various districts throughout the Maharashtra region, Avahan sought to reduce the risk of HIV transmission by means of improving access to health services as well as scaling up community mobilization endeavours (Ibid). By modifying the anti-HIV agenda through targeting self-identified priorities by Indian FSWs, interventions were better able to address the national health epidemic while implementing sustainable solutions. Surveys conducted during Avahan's duration indicated that empowerment strategies resulted not only in "improved self-efficacy for condom use and service utilization" but also additionally increasing FSWs' abilities to "resist abuse from others in the community" (Blanchard et al. 2013:11). By gaining the necessary skills to negotiate condom use with clients, advocate for group rights, and more effectively engage in collective mobilization against stakeholder abuse, FSWs have become better equipped to overcome societal, cultural, and health barriers in their struggle against the HIV epidemic.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the evolution of anti-HIV frameworks and program priorities of development interventions in Indian female sex worker communities reflects the growing understandings of the needs and structural barriers faced by these groups. By seeking to incorporate self-identified areas of concern and actively mobilizing together through participatory programmes, FSWs have improved their access to health and social resources in addition to engaging in group advocacy with stakeholders. The 1992 Sonagachi Project promoted behavioural change through framing the struggle of FSWs as a workers and women's rights issue, which was argued to have effectively addressed gaps in FSW's HIV knowledge while emphasizing collective empowerment. Conversely, the National AIDS Control Programme in the same year focused its efforts instead on health and social services promotion to improve FSWs' access to anti-HIV resources. While the NACP endeavour addressed a key area of need for FSW communities, it failed to provide the skills training and community mobilization to encourage consistent use of condoms and other preventative measures. In light of this, the multilaterally funded Aastha programme of 2004 focused on peer education to encourage collective bargaining with stakeholders and advocacy initiatives to reduce abuse from brothel keepers, police officials, and government politicians.

Addressing the need for collective mobilization facilitated the opportunity for FSW communities to band together to face systemic barriers and devise group solutions to issues such as brothel owner abuse, sexual violence at the hands of abusive clients, and difficulties in accessing state resources. Nevertheless, FSWs did not have the training or the honed abilities to effectively negotiate condom use with clients, thereby presenting a fundamental barrier to anti-HIV efforts. As such, recent endeavours such as the Avahan initiative, with the support of national and non-governmental organization funding, resultantly focused efforts on FSW empowerment to improve levels of self-esteem, confidence, and efficacy with clients. Through an assessment of the shifting frameworks and priorities of anti-HIV efforts in FSW communities, it has become increasingly evident that recent endeavours to incorporate access to health and social resources in addition to collective and individual empowerment strategies have provided effective and sustainable solutions in reducing HIV risks.

Moving forward, there remain a number of significant considerations to address in future anti-HIV endeavours in these communities. Given the intrinsic patriarchal barriers FSWs still face, studies have highlighted the imperative need to include male stakeholders in anti-HIV efforts (Karandikar and Gezinski 2013:125). While empowerment strategies have given FSWs the tools to engage in advocacy with male stakeholders such as brothel owners, pimps, police officials and state politicians, comprehensive HIV interventions require that these stakeholders be included in project planning and implementation. Though cultural and societal barriers continue to present obstacles to FSWs' rights and

welfare, vast improvements in stakeholder relations have been made as a result of empowerment interventions and collective mobilization. Thus, in order to reach truly effective and sustainable solutions for Indian female sex workers, ongoing efforts should not only promote access to health and social resources, as well as collective and individual empowerment strategies, but must also seek to incorporate key stakeholders to overcome structural barriers in the national struggle against HIV.

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The Gender Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure: An Analysis of Strengths and Limitations in The Context of South Africa

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Abstract - Research in the area of domestic and international development has historically relied upon 'development indicators' as a means to determine and rank countries with respect to levels of poverty. This thesis provides an analysis of two such indicators. Specifically, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) are analyzed to assess their strengths, limitations and accuracy in determining the wellbeing of women in relation to poverty in the context of South Africa. These indices differ in terms of their purpose. The GEM is an indicator in measuring 'female agency' (ability, independence) while the GDI focuses on human development measures. Both indices penalize the male score accounting for gender inequality and include the estimated earned income variable. The analysis concludes that these indices are inaccurate and misleading as a means of measuring the wellbeing of women in the context of South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

In the study of International Development, various indicators have been developed in order to assess and measure levels of poverty and development. Some examples of these indicators include the Gross Domestic Product per capita, the Physical Quality of Life Index and the Human Development Index. Over the years, development indicators have been formulated to address current development issues, re-formulated when the indicators do not measure what was intended and abandoned altogether when their application is no longer accurate or relevant.

This paper discusses the strengths and limitations of two development indices the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and the Gender Development Index (GDI) with respect to the wellbeing of women. More specifically, it will examine what the GEM and GDI can highlight with regard to the wellbeing of women in the context of a middle-income country. South Africa is used as a case study for the purpose of this analysis because it is a middle income country, and recent analyses from Andy Sumner indicate that that, "there's a 'new bottom billion' ' – meaning three-quarters of the extreme poor, or up to a billion poor people, live not in the poorest countries but in middle-income countries. This raises all sorts of questions about which countries need aid, the link between aid and poverty" (Villarino, 2011, para. 5). In addition, South Africa has among the best national statistics and data in Africa.

The analysis focuses on the equalities the indices reveal and its limitations. Specifically the thesis will answer the following question: What do these indices actually reveal and conceal when applied to the measurement of the wellbeing of women?

CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF GDI AND GEM

There is a gap in the current state of the literature with respect to the GDI and GEM and the wellbeing of women. There are general critiques on this subject but more detailed analysis about their limitations or inadequacies is absent from the literature. This gap will be addressed by examining what the GDI and GEM indicators reveal and conceal about the wellbeing of women in South Africa. Further, there has been no attempt to meaningfully understand the contextual implications of these measurements within a developing country. This has critical implications regarding the utility, accuracy and relevance in the reporting of women's wellbeing.

In addition, there is research required on deconstructing gender measurements to analyze how and what they measure. This is relevant in gender studies and development because it is necessary to evaluate whether the measures that account for women's wellbeing are socially and culturally appropriate. The GDI and GEM still use classical economic methods for evaluating income inequalities, which can distort the real circumstances occurring.

ACCOUNTING FOR GENDER INEQUALITIES IN DEVELOPMENT

An important step toward a holistic approach of addressing poverty has been made through indices created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Human Development Index (HDI) appeared in 1990 based on the premise, "that people and their lives should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth" (Chant, 2003, p. 11). While the HDI does not take into account a gender component, gendered aspects of poverty such as income and life expectancy have been used to calculate UNDP's Gender-related Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure. The GDI and GEM theoretical foundations branch out of the HDI premise based on a holistic approach in measuring poverty with a gender perspective by including unique features such as the participation of females in top managerial and government positions in the calculations. The GDI and GEM were created in order to move away from neo-liberal economic development thinking and put human needs at the core of development plans. Human development indicators (education, life expectancy) are included in these indices. However, the income component still remains from previous development thinking and can conceal certain gender inequalities.

Producing an internationally comparable measure of the wellbeing of women is important and useful for several reasons. First, the governments of countries shown to have high levels of gender inequality may face pressure to reduce it. Second, these indicators help advance understanding of the relationship between gender and general welfare (Dijkstra & Hanmer, 2000). The UNDP's pioneering work on GDI and GEM have drawn attention to gender inequality in development policy debates, and drawn the attention of academics to the problem of measuring this inequality.

EXPLANATION AND CALCULATION OF THE INDICES

The human development approach developed in response to increasing criticism of conventional perspectives of the 1980's that associated national economic growth and the expansion of individual choices. There was a growing body of evidence that did not support the prominent belief of the 'trickle down' effect surrounding the power of the economy to spread its benefits to end poverty. The work of Sen and others provided the conceptual foundation for an alternative and broader approach defining human development, "as a process of enlarging people's choices and enhancing their capabilities" (Kovacevic, 2010, p. 1).

In order to address the different level of capabilities between males and females, Anand and Sen focused on the concept of an aversion to inequality meaning that, "if two societies had the same average achievement but different levels of inter-group inequality in that achievement (men and women) aversion to inequality would mean that the society with the lower inter-groups inequality should be socially preferable to one having the same average achievement but large inequality" (Bardham & Klasen, 1997, p. 2). In other words, if country A and country B have similar scores on the HDI, but country B has less inequality between men and women, it is socially preferable for women to live in this country than country A.

Based on this notion of aversion to inter-group inequality, the GDI adjusts for the gender gaps to 'penalize' countries' HDI for the existing inter-group inequality between males and females. Since the HDI ignores inter-group differences and assumes that everyone in a country has reached the average achievement in the three components of the index (life expectancy, education and income) the adjustment for gender disparity will lower the GDI relative to the HDI (Bardhan & Klasen, 1997). The extent the GDI score will differ from the HDI will depend on the size of the gender gap in each of the

three variables used to calculate the overall index, combined with penalty applied to the all three male variables.

While the HDI measures average achievement, the GDI adjusts the average achievement to reflect the inequalities between men and women in the following three dimensions: a long and healthy life measured by life expectancy at birth, knowledge as measured by the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio and a decent standard of living measured by estimated earned income (UNDP, 2008).

For a further explanation of GDI calculation, the indices used, and results see Appendix C and D.

The GEM and the GDI were developed and adopted by the UNDP. However, they differ with respect to their theoretical foundation and calculation; the GDI focuses on the loss of human development due to gender gaps and the GEM measures women's agency to access certain resources and their roles within society (Bardhan & Klasen, 1997). The GEM measures women's political participation and decision-making power measured by, "women's and men's percentage shares of parliamentary seats" (UNDP, 2008, p. 360). The second feature includes women's economic participation and decision-making power measured by two indicators. The first indicator measures women's and men's share by percentage of positions of legislators, senior officials and managers. The second indicator evaluates women's and men's percentage shares of professional and technical positions. The final indicator measures women's access to economic resources by assessing women's and men's estimated earned income.

Bardhan and Klasen argued that certain aspects of GEM are an effective tool in evaluating opportunities that are open to women when they state that, "a society that neglects the economic and political potential of half its population is likely to perform worse than a society that draws on all its best talent, regardless of gender"(1997, p. 21).

There are several fundamental elements similar to the GEM in the calculation of the GDI formula. Similar to the GDI, the GEM also penalizes all of the three male indicators for aversion to inequality to adjust for the already present inter-group inequalities between males and females. GEM and GDI calculate estimated earned income in the exact method by using the, "ratio of the female nonagricultural wage to the male nonagricultural wage, male and female shares of the economically active population, total female and male population and GDP per capita" (UNDP, 2008, p. 360). For a further detailed explanation of calculation see Appendix A and B.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA

In order to understand the implications of utilizing the GEM and GDI with respect to women's wellbeing in South Africa, it is helpful to discuss the historical background of the country.

The main cause of widespread poverty is due to the apartheid regime that institutionalized racism across every level of society including the access to healthcare, land, employment, education and political rights. Several laws were passed that systematically reinforced the status quo of the poor treatment and type of access to services the majority of the population was allowed to receive. The *Group Areas Act* passed in 1950, enforced the segregation of the different races to specific areas and allowed for the two oppressed ethnic groups (Blacks and Coloreds) to only own certain zones of land (Worden, 2012). In practice, Blacks and Coloreds were forced off their own land, which in many cases happened to be high quality land due to the type of soil fertility and location, and moved to areas further from city centers with poor land quality. With poor quality housing, schools and healthcare, combined with a lack of job opportunities in the areas the Blacks and Coloreds were forced to live, levels of poverty rose and continue to exist today as these areas or townships struggle to break free from the poverty cycle.

Survey results indicate a high level of poverty in South Africa despite legal and political initiatives implemented to increase the wellbeing of women. According to Hoogeveen and Ozler, "there were approximately 1.8 million (2.3 million) more South Africans in 2000 living with less than $1/day ($2/day) than there were in 1995. Inequality increased mainly due to a sharp increase among the African population" (2005, p.5).

Following the Apartheid regime, the 1996 Constitution was created and was the most progressive constitution on the continent. The constitution, "legalized abortion, giving women equal power in marriage, banning all gender discrimination and providing women of any skin color with the same degree of affirmative action in education, employment, politics" (The Economist, 2010, para. 2).

Theoretically, South Africa has experienced progress in the promotion of women's rights. In practice, some sectors are progressing faster than others. For example, in the political sphere "women hold 44 percent of parliamentary seats, the third highest proportion in the world and 41 percent cabinet posts including many of those often assigned to men: defense, agriculture, foreign affairs, mining, science and technology, and home affairs" (The Economist, 2010, para. 3) including many of the cabinet posts traditionally assigned to men such as defense and home affairs.

In other areas of society, the wellbeing of women has not improved as expected. This is particularly evident in aspects of the public sector but primarily in the private sector. The *Employment Equity Act* requires that, "companies with over fifty employees, must hire and promote women in proportion to their representation in the population as a whole at 52%, however in reality white men still dominate senior management" (The Economist, 2010, para. 4). Moreover, according to the Women's Business Association, "a fifth of the country's private sector boards have no women, and in universities females are more than half of the graduates, however account for 45 percent of the academic staff" (The Economist, 2010, para. 4). This does not mean that female graduates finding academic positions is not progress; nonetheless it is a pattern that exists in gender discriminatory countries because teaching is one of the main 'traditional' employment options for women throughout history.

Finally, that women make up almost half of the formal labour force is a positive trend; however, it is important to look at which roles they play compared to their male counterparts. Women "are in lower-wage sectors, particularly domestic service and on average women still get less than two-thirds of a man's pay packet" (The Economist, 2010, para. 5).

The level of poverty among women-headed households is higher than the average and women continue to earn less than men, even though differences education levels have narrowed significantly, as one can observe in the GDI. South Africa's National Planning Commission state, "about 61 percent of women live in poverty, and 31 percent live in destitution, compared with 39 percent and 18 percent of men respectively" (2011, p.2).

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GDI AND GEM IN THE CONTEXT IN SOUTH AFRICA: LIMITATIONS OF THE MEASURES

The 2007-2008 Human Development UNDP Report provided rationale for valuing the estimated income in both GEM and GDI and stated that, "the income measure in the GDI and GEM indicates a person's capacity to earn income. It is used in the GDI to capture the disparities between men and women in command over resources and in the GEM to capture women's economic independence (2008, p. 361). However, in computing the GDI and GEM, estimated income for females is problematic because the indicator is based on an estimate of the female share in earned income.

Specifically it is a problem of defining what constitutes an 'economically active population'. The estimated income is calculated from the total female share in the economically active population. For example, if family enterprises and subsistence activities are not included in defining an economically active population, many individuals will be excluded, particularly women, as they tend to largely make up

this sector of the economy (Dijkstra and Hanmer, 2000). These women are still earning an income they but are excluded from the definition and will not be accounted for in the calculation resulting in an inaccurate reflection of the active female labour force within the country. As a result the estimated income for females will most likely be lower than the real income.

Defining the informal economy can range from country to country. Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) defines the informal sector as: “businesses that are not registered in any way. They are generally small in nature, and are seldom run from business premises. Instead, they are run from homes, street pavements or other informal arrangements” (Devey, Skinner and Valodia, 2006, p. 4). In 2000–2005, informal economy workers represented between 31 and 34 percent of South Africa’s labour force (Devey, Skinner and Valodia, 2006). This is a significant issue when 34 percent of the population is missing from the estimated earned income because they do not fit into the formal economy definition.

The relationship between the wellbeing of women and the informal economy is that the, “majority of street traders are black women who trade in a range of goods including clothing, fruit and vegetables and a labour force survey conducted in 2000 estimated that there are 500,000 street vendors in South Africa” (Consultancy Africa Intelligence, 2013, para. 3). This point is critical in calculating GDI and GEM because many working women who earn an individual and/or family wage are excluded from the calculation. It is not known how much the estimated earned income indicator would be effected if informal female workers were included in the GDI and GEM calculation, however it would be interesting to observe whether the income gap would decrease.

Initial speculation would suggest that a more accurate reflection of the formal and informal economy would be represented if the women working in the informal sector were to be included in the calculations, especially due to the large portion of women contributing to this sector. Statistics from South Africa on the role that women fulfill in the informal economy suggest that the measurements would increase and would constitute a more accurate reflection of women’s wellbeing. However, it is difficult to determine whether women in South Africa working in the informal sector experience the same income gap as their male counterparts in the same sector. Further, a more accurate depiction of this situation would require the addition of both the male and female informal labour force to the estimated incomes. The result would be a more accurate representation regarding women and may also reveal similar income gaps in the formal sector. In addition, the development of a separate indicator for evaluating men and women’s income in the informal sector would be helpful in understanding income inequality between the genders. This would be a useful measure to observe whether there is a similar income gaps in the formal sector.

Another criticism of the income portion of the GDI and GEM formulas is women’s share of earned income is based on the male/female difference in urban wages rather accounting for rural or the informal sector (Dijkstra and Hanmer, 2000). Specifically, the calculation only uses a nonagricultural wage. This is problematic when calculating GDI and GEM in South Africa because the rural agricultural sector is an important source for employment for women (Schuler, 2007). Hart and Aliber found that, “women represent almost two-thirds of those engaged in some form of agriculture, the majority of these women do it primarily as a main source or extra source of household food” (2012, p. 2). Moreover, only in commercial farming are the number of women and men roughly equal. South Africa’s agricultural sector contributes a large portion to the national gross domestic product, at 12 percent compared to the fishing industry at 0.5 percent (South African Government Information, 2013). With a population of 51 million people and 8.5 million employees working in the agricultural sector (South African Government Information, 2013), it is reasonable to expect a change in the estimated earned income if an average between agricultural and nonagricultural wages were included in the indicator.

In response to criticism regarding crude measurements of calculating estimated earned income, the UNDP responded that, “because data on wages in rural areas and in the informal sector are rare, the Human Development Report has used nonagricultural wages and assumed that the ratio of female wages to male wages in the nonagricultural sector applies to the rest of the economy” (UNDP, 2008, p.

361). It is also important to note that the shares of earned incomes by males and females do not measure the gaps in consumption at the household level. The GDI was created in similar fashion to the HDI in that it focuses on a more humanistic approach to poverty, moving away from a strong reliance on economic growth. However, the GDI's income component is given equal weight to education and life expectancy still highlighting its strong importance in measuring poverty. Importantly, Bardhan and Klasen point out that, "high earned income does not always translate into high female well-being and consumption levels" (1997, p. 14).

When a country has similar male and female education and life expectancy levels even after the aversion to inequality is applied to the male index, the income indicator will impact the overall country score more significantly, as in most developing countries income inequality is the most unequal. For example, countries in the Middle East and North Africa have the largest gaps in earned incomes between males and females. These regions also have very small gaps in life expectancy and education; however, due to the large size of the income gap compared to the other indices and how all three indices have equal value, the one with the most inequality will have a larger effect on the calculated value (Bardhan and Klasen, 1997). In 1999, Bardhan and Klasen calculated the implied penalties for inequality for the three indicators in the GDI and observed that the gap in income accounts for 85 percent of the total gender gap on average (Dijkstra, 2001).

A criticism that applies to both the GDI and GEM is that cultural and social elements are impacted by a women's increase in income, suggesting that a rise in income does not necessarily translate into a higher level of well-being and empowerment. In Chant's research authors Bradshaw and Linneker stated that by working in '*maquilas'* (export processing plants), "becoming richer materially may be accompanied with frustration or demeaning situations for women" (2003, p. 24). Also, certain local cultural values are more important to the women than generating more income, such as modesty, respect, are not included in GEM or GDI (2003, p. 24), therefore disconnecting what the local women value and what many development actors believe women should value.

A limitation of both GDI and GEM is how all females and males are broadly grouped under the category of their sex when it is also useful to evaluate how different ages and ethnicities experience poverty (Chant, 2003, p. 25) which is may range from an elderly indigenous woman to a woman belonging to a majority ethnicity living in a wealthier city. However, this is not a problem unique to GDI and GEM because when calculating many measurements of wellbeing and human development these issues are not considered. Finally, the GDI and GEM are criticized for the general inaccuracy of the data itself. Most of the data "are developed from the national census, which in themselves are rarely a reliable source of information, prone as they are to sporadic collection, poor enumeration and imprecise definition of key terms, not to mention gender bias" (Chant 2003, p. 23).

STRENGTH OF THE INDICES

The major strength of the GDI is the access to education indicator (measured as the literacy and gross enrolment measure) because of the relationship between higher education levels and improved employment status, income and autonomy for women. As a result it is one of the most important and most universal indicators for gender equality (Dijkstra, 2001). Another strength is the access to healthcare (measured as life expectancy at birth) because it demonstrates discrimination in access to health services and reflects cultural ideas on men and women (Dijkstra, 2001).

In the South African context, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and its impact on longevity affects calculations of life expectancy. By the end of 2002, the Department of Health estimated there were 5.3 million people infected with HIV/AIDS and reported that, "there is solid evidence of this increased mortality in South Africa and increased mortality was more marked for women than for men. A woman between the ages of 25-29 was three and a half times more likely to die in 1999/2000 than she would have been in 1985" (Whiteside & Lee, 2006, p. 385). This mortality rate affects life expectancy at birth but also has economic consequences, "the responsibility for care of orphans and the sick has largely fallen

to women who make up 70 percent of caregivers" (Whiteside & Lee, 2006, p. 387). This responsibility is reflected in the gender gap in the estimated income because being the main caregiver of a household requires women to stay at home or very small income supplements in the informal sector rather than finding employment outside of the home.

The high rate of domestic violence and sexual abuse is another major factor that impacts life expectancy and women's wellbeing in South Africa. Jewkes studied gender violence in South Africa stated that, "a women is killed by an intimate partner every eight hours, a probable underestimate because no perpetrator is identified in 20 percent of killings. That is double the rate of such murders in the United States" (Faul, 2013, para. 6). While South Africa has one of the most progressive constitutions in the continent regarding women's rights, the current legislation has had minimal effect on protecting women from domestic violence or encouraging the reporting of incidents.

The Inter-Ministerial Committee on Violence against Women and Children found that even when "victims reported cases of domestic violence to police or social workers, [...] their plea for help fell on deaf ears or they were told to resolve the matter with their partners" (Faul, 2013, para. 10). Female life expectancy may actually be significantly lower if the amount of gender violence, especially when it results in a loss of life, were to be calculated in the GDI.

The main strength in the GEM is that it includes the percentage of females in technical, professional, administrative, and management positions that are included in this measure. It is an indicator concerning access to economic resources since these jobs are higher paying jobs. Dijkstra argued that, "access to administrative and management positions reflects to some extent decision making power in society, while access to technical and professional occupations reflect opportunities for career development" (2001, p. 322). This indicator reflects increased employment opportunities for women, which measures the extent of female power. The higher the share of women in these positions the more power women will have on average in the household. Dijkstra also suggests that in comparison to the number of women elected into parliament, this indicator is less vulnerable to the changing political climates (2001, p. 322).

The female share in parliament is a strong indicator for relative female power in society. In addition, there is data readily available from many countries regarding the number of females in parliament. Unfortunately, there is little or no information on female elected officials at regional and local levels (Dijkstra, 2001). As a result, the accuracy of this indicator to provide the reality for most South African women is limited to perceptions regarding women's power and wellbeing associated with their representation in parliament. Chant suggested that female representation in parliament may be important as it indicates several features of women's wellbeing including gender discrimination in the workplace or changing attitudes to women decision makers. However, this measure excludes the majority of women in many societies whose daily duties and lives remain generally unaffected by national politics ad who own local participation in politics are more likely to be restricted to local levels (2003, p.24).

For example in South Africa women's representation in local government has climbed steadily "from 19 percent in after the 1995 elections to 29.6 percent after the 2000 local elections to 40 percent after the 2006 elections" (EISA, 2009, para. 3). Another reason for the rising levels of women in local politics is due to the African National Congress (ANC) commitment to reaching a minimum quota of 30 percent females within the political party. This trend would suggest the importance of incorporating involvement in local politics as part of this measure.

GENERAL FINDINGS: GDI AND GEM

Table 1: South Africa Human Development Report 2009: Data from 2007

Sex	Life Expectancy at Birth	Adult Literacy	Combined gross enrollment ratio in education	Estimated earned income ($US, PPP)
Female	53	87.2%	77.3%	$7,328
Male	49.8	88.9%	76.3%	$12,273

Source: (UNDP, 2009).

HDI Rank: 129 out of 182 countries
HDI Value: 0.690
GDI Rank: 109 out of 182 countries
GDI Value: 0.680
Source: (UNDP, 2009).

According to the statistics in the above table, the GDI and HDI are almost identical in value that indicates minimal loss of human development due to gender gaps. However, an important indicator in the GDI and GEM, namely the estimated earned income, demonstrates a large gender gap in income. This gap can, in part, explain why South Africa ranks lower on the GDI and HDI apart from having a very low life expectancy at birth for both sexes. Not only is there a significant gap between males and females in estimated income that subsequently lowers the overall level of GDI and HDI, the life expectancy at birth for both sexes is also low ranking, which further decreases the indices.

Based on this statistic, one could speculate that the income component does not have an overriding effect on the calculation as suggested in certain countries when it is an outlier (largest gap out of all three indicators) that lowers the overall score. In contrast, with South Africa, the life expectancy is already quite low therefore the income gap does not have a significant impact in producing a low score. If the life expectancy and education levels were higher for both males and females and the income gap was large between the sexes, it might be argued that the income gap indicator would decrease the score significantly.

Table 2: Gender Empowerment Measure: Data from 2007

Sex	Seats in parliament held (% of total)	Legislators, senior officials and managers (% of total)	Professional and technical workers (% of total)	Ratio estimated female to male earned income	Estimated earned income ($US, PPP)	Ministerial positions (% of total)
Female	34%	34%		.60	$7,328	45%
Male	66%	66%			$12,273	55%

Source: (UNDP, 2009).
GEM: 26 out of 182 countries
GEM Value: 0.687
Source: (UNDP, 2009).

As indicated in the table, South Africa scores fairly high on the Gender Empowerment Measure despite the fact that the income gap is quite large and females earn 60 percent of what males earn. It can be concluded that the wellbeing of women is improving in the political sphere yet remains males in the economic sector. However the income indicator does not have a measurable impact on the GEM. This is similar to the GDI in South Africa as the income component should decrease the GEM due to the large inequality gap between the incomes.

OVERALL FINDINGS

The conclusions drawn from both scores of the GDI and GEM in South Africa is that a large estimated income gap does not play a significant role in the overall score. In the GEM the income gap appears to have little bearing on the calculation as South Africa still manages to score quite high. This is very problematic when applying a measure that evaluates the wellbeing of women within a country because a country can still score relatively high on GEM while having serious economic inequalities between men and women. The estimated income gap cannot be ascertained within this calculation unless the individual variables within the GEM are taken into account. Beteta reported a similar conclusion in the research on Barbados (2006, p. 223). She stated that, "high levels of gender equality in terms of women in parliaments and in decision-making positions- it is ranked 24 in the 2004 *Human Development Report* – but where women are still the majority of the poor, female unemployment rates are higher than those of males" (2012, p. 223).

By neglecting to account for the three separate variables used in the GEM formula one might conclude, in the South African case, that women experience low levels of inequality since the country ranks fairly high out of all the countries ranked. This is not accurate because income disparity, high rates of domestic violence and the high incidence of HIV/AIDS among women contradict the findings that imply a high level of wellbeing. In the GDI, the income gap has a minimal impact on the calculation compared to the GEM because the life expectancy is also fairly low. Due to the fact that two out of the three variables score low, the overall GDI will decrease.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper analyzed the strengths and limitations of the GEM and GDI in measuring the wellbeing of women in the context of South Africa. The analysis provided evidence that suggests that the application of these indices is problematic when studying the wellbeing of women for a number of reasons. Specifically, it was demonstrated by the GEM and GDI scores that a country can experience significant female income inequalities yet have a high overall GEM score and ranking with respect to the wellbeing of women. Subsequently, continued application of these indices for the purpose of measuring wellbeing is questionable since it produces an inaccurate perspective of the reality of women in this country. Future research in this area should examine, in more detail, the direct effects of these indices in the overall calculation and how the results can be corrected in order to produce a measure that is more effective in demonstrating an accurate status of the wellbeing of women in South Africa. In addition, increased attention should be given to developing additional indices that incorporate different variables in order to more accurately measure the wellbeing of women. With respect to issue of limited accessibility for women to participate in national politics, it would be useful to examine how the GEM would be impacted, when taking into account women's participation in provincial and municipal level politics.

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APPENDIX A:

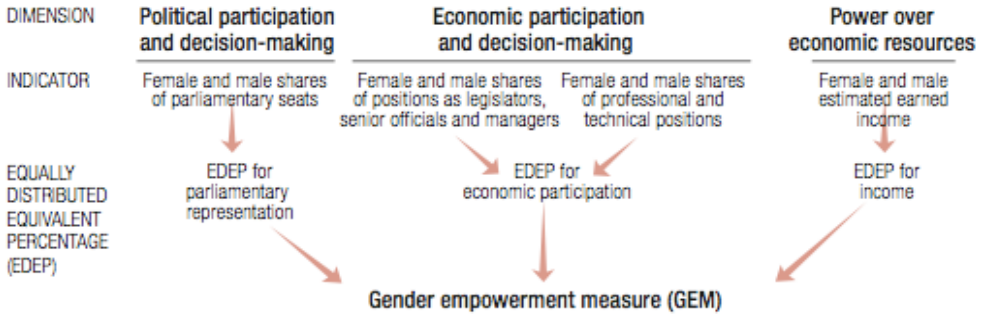

Figure A1: The indicators and dimensions calculated within the Gender Empowerment Measure (UNDP, 2008, p. 355).

APPENDIX B:

The GEM and GDI use the same maximum and minimum values for income earned, however the values are used in a differently in GEM. The GDI uses the same formula as the HDI to calculate estimated earned income in order to compare the values, otherwise if a different formula was used it would be very difficult to draw conclusions from observing the GDI and HDI.

Another significant difference in calculating the GDI and GEM in that in the GEM calculation there is an extra step to compute the equally distributed equivalent percentage (EDEP). The calculated value for each indicator is divided by fifty and the rationale behind this method, "is that in an ideal society, with equal empowerment of the sexes, the GEM variables would equal 50% that is women's share would equal men's share for each variable"(UNDP, 2008, p. 360). In other words the assumption is that a 50/50 share of the population for females and males should be the ideal goal in all three indices.

APPENDIX C:

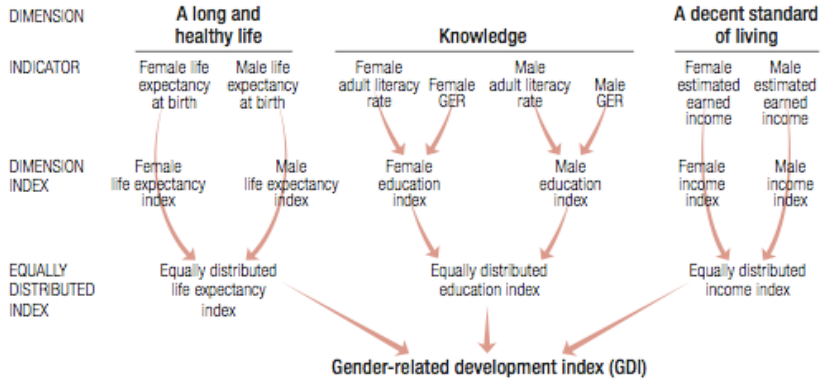

Figure C1: The indicators and dimensions calculated within the Gender Development Index (UNDP, 2008, p. 358).

APPENDIX D:

It is important to note the similarities between calculating the GDI and HDI in regards to using maximum and minimum values in the formula. Each indicator (life expectancy, knowledge and estimated income) includes a predetermined maximum and minimum value within the formula as well as the actual value from the specific country. For example the estimated earned income maximum value is $40,000

and the minimum value is $100. The main difference in calculating both indicators is that GDI accounts for the aversion to inequality and penalizes the male calculations for each indicator to make the indicator more equal to the female and therefore account for gender inequalities. In other words the improvements in female achievements are given more weight than improvements in male achievements, given females are at a lower average in the first instance (Dijkstra and Hanmer, 2000).

In calculating the life expectancy index, it is based on a given maximum and minimum values that are different for men and women taking into account on average women live five years longer than men (UNDP, 2008). The index for knowledge is a weighted average of the achievements on literacy that makes up two thirds of the formula and primary and secondary enrolment account for one third.

The calculation of the GDI is straightforward in that it is the un-weighted average of the three component indices, the equally distributed life expectancy index, the equally distributed education index and the equally distributed income index.

Reproductive Justice, Gender and International Development

By: Grace Sheehy

While the study of fieldwork and practice often excites students, the study of theory is widely considered to be comparatively dull. It can be difficult to determine the connections between theory and practice from a classroom, leaving many students of international development studies wondering whether theory really matters for development practice. How are academic constructs applied on the ground, where resources, time, and energy are scarce? My educational background in international development has been greatly informed by my concentration in women's studies, where theory is paramount. When it comes to gendered approaches to development, theory is crucial. My field of interest and experience is in reproductive health. In this field, theory provides an essential framework for recognizing structural forms of oppression that hinder women's access to reproductive healthcare and services. Reproductive justice is one framework that is of particular importance, because it can be used to inform other development practices as well.

Reproductive justice links social justice and reproductive rights. It is defined as the "complete physical, mental, spiritual, social and economic well-being of women and girls" (Ross, 2006, p. 14), going beyond issues of service delivery to encompass a social movement. The concept emerged in the United States in the 1980s as a result of discontent among women of colour and Indigenous women with regard to the discourse surrounding reproductive rights, which was largely led by white women and focused on issues of choice and access to abortion (Ross, 2006). Many women felt that this discourse did not account for either their lived experiences, or the complicated ways their identities shaped their abilities to access reproductive healthcare and services.

Reproductive justice is informed by the theoretical concept of intersectionality, which describes how systems of oppression are interconnected, functioning in multiple and simultaneous ways to shape identities and experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). Reproductive justice forces us to look beyond the mere physical availability of reproductive healthcare and services to examine the wider set of social issues that can impact accessibility. These can include education, income, ability, race, class, gender identity, etc. Through reproductive justice, we can recognize the "social reality of inequality" (Ross 2006, p. 14), and incorporate structural forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism, into discussions of access to reproductive healthcare and services. A framework of reproductive justice could do the same for international development more broadly. Reproductive justice allows us to see how various facets of people's identities interlock to create complex and unique experiences which influence their health and ability to access healthcare and services. Efforts to improve access to services are made more effective by focusing on issues more diverse than mere physical availability.

In the field of international development, this framework is crucial to informing practice. We cannot "do" development effectively if we do not understand how systems of oppression create diverse and unique experiences. As the author Eli Clare writes, "Gender reaches into disability; disability wraps around class; class strains against abuse; abuse snarls into sexuality; sexuality folds on top of race … everything finally piling into a single human body" (1999, p.143). A framework of reproductive justice helps us to understand differences both between and *within* groups. Too often, women of the Global South are represented as a homogeneous group. These representations are laden with stereotypes, for instance that they are all poor or oppressed. Though these stereotypes are undoubtedly problematic, they can also be dangerous when used to inform practice; wars waged on Afghanistan and Iraq were justified through the "liberation" of presumably oppressed women living there. The propagation of these stereotypes does an injustice to women in these countries, and hinders the effectiveness of development work by ignoring the fact that women's experiences are diverse and complex. It also presumes that these women cannot speak for themselves, or identify their own needs.

Through a framework of reproductive justice, the differences between women can be acknowledged and celebrated, while the systems of oppression that affect their lives and health can be recognized and fought. This can then be used to better inform policy and planning based on women's needs and experiences. Development work informed by reproductive justice would include working with women in the community; development would become a process they are a part of, rather than something that happens to them. This framework has applications across the field of development, and is crucial to recognizing injustices and inequalities in development practice.

Reproductive justice forces us to re-examine concepts of choice and access, and recognize the diverse factors that create barriers to accessing reproductive healthcare, or benefitting from development initiatives. It brings structural forms of oppression, like racism and sexism, to the foreground of gendered approaches to development, not just within countries of the Global South, but in relations between countries of the Global North and South. Much international development work has historically been predicated on notions of the poor as "voiceless" or "oppressed." Perhaps, through a lens of reproductive justice, we can better understand our own complicity in these narratives and in propagating these stereotypes. We can then work to dismantle them, and pave the way for better development work. By using theory to guide our development practice, we can incorporate frameworks like intersectionality and reproductive justice into our everyday work, and do justice to the women we work with by refusing to see them as voiceless or oppressed, and instead as partners in development.

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One Size Does Not Fit All: A Study of Microfinance Practices in Peru

By: Sarah Silverberg

Abstract - Microfinance enables many Peruvian women to start businesses and fight poverty. While microfinance has many economic and social benefits, it also causes problems within communities. The importance of gender relations thus emerges, as they subtly explain why microfinance is not poverty's cure. The group-lending system and the accompanying peer pressure have created social problems, mental health problems and power struggles. While microfinance empowers women to be more independent, the machismo society of Peru can lead to problems such as domestic violence and theft. Furthermore, the problems of poverty run far deeper than financial instability. Microfinance cannot completely solve poverty, because it does not cater to different abilities of clients and various business sectors. The moderate-poor are helped while the extremely impoverished are increasingly ignored; loans to men are increasing, while those to women are not. Lastly, microfinance cannot be a 'one size fits all' solution, because not all people are necessarily entrepreneurs.

One day our grandchildren will go to museums to see what poverty was like.

Mohammed Yunus (2006)

INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of the microfinance movement in the last half-century, the world has tried to reduce poverty by enabling the poor to help themselves. Microfinance is the provision of small-scale financial services to low-income clients including loans, credit, savings, insurance, and fund transfers. These loans are typically smaller than those issued by a bank, and cater to clientele who are not usually eligible to apply for financial services, particularly women. Since the 1970's, there have been many microfinance organizations across Peru working to decrease poverty, and it will thus be the principle case study examined in this paper.

The advent of microfinance has empowered thousands of entrepreneurs in developing countries by providing small-scale loans to low-income clients, looking to start or expand their own business. These loans are smaller than those issued by banks and cater to clients who cannot apply for larger loans. Typical loans require collateral, yet much of microfinance institutions' (MFIs) clientele do not own anything of sufficient value to serve as such. Microfinancing uses other strategies to ensure repayment of loans, such as group lending. In addition, MFIs largely focus on lending to women, a segment of the population often excluded from the formal labour force (Pait, 2009). By enabling the poorer part of the population to increase its output, and by increasing employment and standards of living in developing countries, microfinance is addressing the countries' economic status while also working on equity issues. Although it is not a perfect solution to poverty, microfinance sets a foundation for development in an increasingly globalized world.

All of these financial services complement the recent economic growth in Peru. The 1990s and 2000s saw the development of stable exchange rates, low inflation, and open trade (León, 2008). Yet while there has been some growth, fifty percent of the population remains below the poverty line, particularly in rural regions (León, 2008). Although microfinancing has improved the situation of poverty in Peru, it has not succeeded in significantly decreasing poverty. There are significant drawbacks associated with microfinance institutions' group lending practices, from issues that arise from Peru's machismo society, from the type of clientele sought, and from problems with the 'one size fits all solution' in addressing the deeper roots of poverty. In light of both the benefits and consequences of microfinance and their impacts on the lives of women, this paper seeks to understand the implications of microfinance in Peruvian society and evaluate whether the benefits outweigh the consequences. While microfinance has the potential to empower women, change the oppressive culture in which many

women find themselves, and help them escape poverty, there are also important drawbacks of microfinance practices that must be considered. A gendered approach to the development practice of microfinance is crucial in understanding its potential societal impact and its implications on gender roles. Indeed, without recognizing the social pressures under which women find themselves, a cost-benefit analysis of microfinance practices would be inaccurate and incomplete.

THE PERUVIAN CONTEXT: A NEED FOR SERVICES

A major issue in Peru is the lack of financial services available to the half of the Peruvian population that is below the poverty line. Approximately sixty-five percent of the population cannot access financial services like loans and bank accounts, and financial institutions are not interested in assisting low-income or rural populations (Sanz, 2008). In 2004, there were only 4.2 bank branches for every 100,000 Peruvians, compared to one for every 4,000 Canadians (Department of Finance Canada, 2008; Sanz, 2008). Factors that contribute to this shortage include the high cost of services and inaccurate risk analysis calculation. Risk analysis methodologies do not consider the importance of informal economics, as they determine credit worthiness based on stable wages and exclude income from informal economic activities. They do not account for payment histories with commercial establishments and other remittances, when these remittances account for 3.2 percent of Peru's total GDP. Since few remittances are received via bank account, they are not considered income on a credit application. Consequently, over a third of the income received by twenty-four percent of Peruvians cannot be included in credit risk analysis (Sanz, 2008). Banks are therefore often unwilling to provide services to lower-income clients.

Microfinance has been proposed as a tool to fight poverty since Muhammad Yunus's Grameen Bank in Bangladesh expanded in the 1970s. Similar microfinance initiatives soon began working in Peru to help close the wealth disparity. Many believed microfinance would pull people out of poverty and be a solution to the country's economic inequalities. There are five main types of MFIs in Peru, including Municipal Savings and Loan Institutions (Cajas Municipales de Ahorro y Crédito, or CMACs) and Entities for the Development of the Small and Microenterprise. These tend to target clientele who may not even qualify for the microcredit programs run by other larger banks and financial institutions. While the types of microfinance schemes in Peru are diverse, common features include vocational classes and management classes offered through MFIs, and the use of rotating group schemes where participants pool money and take out loans accordingly.

THE BENEFITS OF MICROFINANCE: FIGHTING AGAINST PERUVIAN POVERTy

Microcredit has had significant benefits in Peru. MFIs reach segments of the population who may not have other means of reducing their poverty. Banks account for eighty percent of the loan portfolio markets, while MFIs account for just ten. However, banks only account for half of the actual number of loans, whereas MFIs account for a quarter of the market (Sanz, 2008). MFIs therefore provide a large number of small loans that are more useful to more people than the bank's larger loans. Additionally, group-lending operations keep money circulating within small towns (Hossain, 2002). Microfinancing helps eliminate illegal financial services providing services at extreme interest rates by providing a better option (Allen, 1962). While MFIs often charge high interest rates, they are still lower than the exorbitant rates of 30 or 40 percent found in the practice of many traditional lenders. Microfinance allows families and communities to save, improve their housing and health situations, and finance their children's educations (Hossain, 2002).

Microfinance also impacts borrowers socially, particularly when its borrowers are women. Leadership skills are developed, particularly in young people who strive towards economic and social change (Allen, 1962). Group meetings have been shown to have therapeutic and social benefits for women (Hossain, 2002). In traditional Peruvian culture, relationships are highly valued. These group relationships are therefore extremely important to the women involved (Wright, 2006). They increase the confidence and empowerment of borrowers, particularly women who may not be self-confident.

Financial success is also a source of prestige for these women (Hossain, 2002).

In light of this, the Economist evaluated Peru as having the best overall microfinance business environment in the world in 2010 (EIU, 2010). While Peru is currently a microfinance leader in Latin America, ranking fourth in the world in terms of regulatory frameworks, fifth in investment climate and first in institutional development, it is questionable how long this success will last (EIU, 2010). Lending portfolios have deteriorated due to economic slowdown, and it is too early to evaluate the success of new services such as fund transfers (EIU, 2010). While MFIs are increasingly self-sustainable, watching their profits may compromise their social impact (Copestake, 2005). Peru's MFI's should ensure that their loan portfolios do not grow uncontrollably and that they can continue to be able to make repayments on their loans, which recently sparked revolts in Nicaragua and India (EIU, 2010). However, if they continue to manage their loans responsibly and pay them back in a timely manner, microfinance organizations can hope for increased financial and social benefits.

THE DARKER SIDE OF MICROFINANCE

Although microfinancing in Peru has given large segments of the population access to financial services, and while it has allowed their savings, confidence, and empowerment to grow, the fact remains that microfinance has not alleviated poverty in much of the population. Despite the benefits of microfinancing, Peru still ranks as one of the poorer countries worldwide. It is therefore necessary to investigate the drawbacks of microfinance. Problems have arisen from the group lending system and the consequences of peer pressure. As well, microfinancing has had limited success because it does not address the social climate in Peru, particularly its traditionally machismo society. Lastly, there are drawbacks to microfinancing's one-size fits all approach which neglects the different capabilities of clientele and the ineffectiveness of microfinance as a solution to the deeper causes of poverty. Recognizing the particular influences and societal dynamics in which women find themselves helps identify the hidden complications that microfinance may impose on their lives.

Group Dynamics

Unique to microfinancing is the replacement of collateral by group lending. Yunus developed a solution to the lack of collateral by replacing collateral with peer pressure (Counts 2008). While there are seven types of group-lending systems in place in Peru, they share the same principles (De Janvry et al., 2003). If one member defaults on a loan, there are ramifications for the entire group. These include disqualification from further group loans. As well, joint liability shifts the responsibility for repayment monitoring onto the borrowers rather than lenders, thus decreasing the loan's cost and associated risk (Hisaki, 2006; Morduch, 1999). Furthermore, group lending moves away from the hacienda system in which clients tried to gain favour from landlords in return for protection or capital (Wright 2006).While microfinance organizations usually discuss the benefits of group-lending, there are flaws in the risk management system and serious social implications that result from the amount of peer pressure put on clients to repay loans.

Strategic defaulting has become a problem within microfinance organizations. Defaulting occurs in some systems more than others. In rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs), in which members regularly contribute to a fund and distribute the lump sum to one member each cycle, risk of strategic defaulting is increased. Since borrowers repay their loans over the next cycle, a member may strategically default in order to receive the benefits of a loan without the costs. In village bank systems, groups collectively apply for loans and each member is responsible for their own repayment, therefore defaulting has no significant benefits. Rather, defaulting makes it more difficult for the entire group to borrow again. Microfinance organizations may therefore want to consider how each system leads to strategic defaulting and modify their approaches when trying to improve their practices.

Extreme examples of peer pressure's role include cases in which borrowers who are unable to repay their loans commit suicide (Chen, 2007). While suicide is usually documented in ROSCA group

lending, it is not unreasonable to assume that it can occur in all group-lending systems in which peer pressure replaces collateral. In cases where communities are closely connected, suicide is more likely as borrowers feel obligated to repay loans (Chen, 2007). Peer pressure is frequently cited as a possible factor in these suicides. Furthermore, 46.2 percent of suicides among self-employed people are attributable to debt or co-guarantor problems compared to 15.4 percent of non-self-employed people (Chen, 2007). Moreover, one third of those self-employed suicides were specifically related to co-guarantor problems compared to 3.6 percent of non-self-employed cases (Chen, 2007). Since microfinance promotes self-employment and entrepreneurship while going into debt, this statistic suggests that this increased rate of suicide among self-employed related to debt could be a direct consequence of microfinance. This indicates that taking on debt while self-employed may be too stressful and risky an initiative to be a widespread solution, and that more emphasis should be placed on employment rather than entrepreneurship.

Another drawback of microfinancing relates to the group dynamics within joint-liability systems. When lending groups are formed, leaders are often selected to manage the group's finances and deal directly with the MFI. In at least one study, ordinary women are unable to receive literacy and financial training, as it is given only to group presidents, secretaries, and treasurers (Wright, 2006). However, these leaders often come from positions of relative power in communities and are typically less in need of money and training. Those most in need of skills training are the ones least likely to receive it. Yunus claims that "All human beings have an innate but generally unrecognized skill – the survival skill" and that they do not need us to "teach them how to survive" (Yunus, 2007, p. 113). Perhaps Yunus' advice should not be applied when attempting to give women money while they have no literacy or financial skills. Leaders often abuse their positions of power to embezzle money from other women in their lending groups due to these women's ignorance of financial practice (Wright, 2006). As well, while microfinance is purported to narrow the division between wealthy and poor, this practice of training the better-off group leaders strengthens existing hierarchies, minimally improving a middle class that straddles the poverty line.

In many MFIs, most women do receive basic literacy, numeracy, financial training, and skill training is done more equitably (Stiglitz, 2006). Despite this training, however, there are many factors that may lead to certain members taking advantage of the group as a whole. Katie Wright's case study in Porcón, Peru, explains why the group-lending system does not help so many women. In *clubes de madres*, a type of group-lending system, women collectively generate income and are jointly responsible for payment. However, there are reports of self-enrichment amongst group presidents; some men pressure wives to bring home more money, forcing the women to steal (Wright, 2006). Women may allow group leaders to steal out of ignorance. Since these women have relatively little training, and since they have no control over the group's assets, they may not know how much is being stolen. As well, they may be ignorant of how to deal with local authorities or engage supporting MFIs to address the situation. In cases where women know the extent of embezzlement but are unwilling to approach the authorities, many opt out of microfinancing schemes. Furthermore, MFI's are generally unwilling to intervene (Wright, 2006).

Some women may continue to belong to groups in which they are exploited because of social constructs in traditional Peruvian society. Personal relationships are vital; one without a family is considered poor. In microfinancing, groups are frequently formed with women from the same families (Wright, 2006). It may be easier to remain financially poor than to also fall into a poverty of relationships, and risk losing other benefits from the group or community by creating tension between relationships. It is therefore difficult for organizations to be aware of these problems of embezzlement as they may go unreported.

As well, while there may be a certain level of corruption within a group-lending system, whereby certain women are forced to contribute more than others, they may still receive other benefits, monetary or other, from being involved in such a program. For example, they may develop valuable entrepreneurial skills or develop closer social ties with others. As well, because of the difficulty in reporting such abuses

of the system, it is difficult to ascertain how widespread this type of corruption is. Different microfinance systems, particularly those which help women more equitably access workshops on literacy, numeracy and other skills, may not encounter such abuses of power. Regardless, however, Wright's study makes clear how important the social dynamic within a community is to the success of a group-lending scheme, particularly for women for whom these societal ties are so vital (2006).

The Prospects and Problems with Empowering Women in a Machismo Society

While there have been problems within the group lending systems used by microfinance, the empowerment of women, purported as a benefit of microfinancing, has also caused problems within households. MFIs claim to specifically target women in poverty and empower them through increased independence and confidence. However, in doing so they can create difficult social dynamics that challenge societal norms.

Women have been involved in MFIs for decades. From 1985 to 1995, violence in Peru was responsible for displacing many people, resulting in an economic crisis. Women began seeking supplementary income, and NGOs began forming *clubes de madres* in order to alleviate financial stress. While women may have been the original target group, various factors have led to a decreasing emphasis on both women and the extreme poor in recent years.

Microfinancing was not initially meant to empower women, which is now promoted as a major benefit of the system (Pait, 2009). Non-government organizations target women because they believed them to be more trustworthy. Furthermore, women may be intimidated by male organization workers and therefore more compliant with the organization (Hossain, 2002). Men are less likely to be intimidated in the same fashion. Men, particularly in a machismo society, are more likely to challenge the organization and are thus more difficult clients to manage.

Although in many cases women are empowered and gain confidence through their microloans, research has investigated whether domestic violence has increased as a result of microfinancing. Some researchers have found higher rates of domestic violence amongst those involved in microfinance, and it is possible that consequences of microfinancing may lead to increased domestic violence, especially in Peruvian society where it is already a major problem (Hossain, 2002; Schuler, 1998). In 2006, 69 percent of Peruvian women reported having been a victim of abuse at some point in their lives (U.S. Department of State, 2007). It is possible to illustrate some of the possible ties between microfinance and increased domestic violence. For instance, women may be reprimanded for being distracted from household activities (Hossain, 2002). Giving women empowerment and independence may lead to more household conflicts, especially as men in a machismo society adjust to more independent and vocal wives. If microfinance is instigating problems, then its practices may need to be revised.

It should be noted that there are conflicting sources as to whether microfinance truly influences increased rates of domestic violence. It is important to note that many women claim that microcredit has prevented a certain amount of violence. It has increased their general protection through group solidarity and by making the issues visible (Schuler, 1998). While this may be a trend as women are involved in microfinance organizations for long periods of time, it is possible that domestic violence may temporarily increase as women begin to assert themselves at home. It takes time for other men in the household, such as husbands and sons, to adjust.

Although microfinance traditionally targets women as their clientele, they are increasingly moving away from this goal. Since women overwhelmingly comprise of the poorest of the poor, microfinance organizations seem to be targeting the less-severely impoverished. While some organizations like Consortium of Private Organizations to Promote the Development of Small and Micro Enterprises have on average 78.8 percent of clientele as women, the percentage of female clientele has been declining. Many organizations now lend equally to both genders. The organization Confianza, for instance, issues approximately 46 percent of its loans to women (León, 2008). Since women tend to live in greater

poverty than men, they may be less likely to take out larger loans, meaning that their average loan sizes are smaller. According to Edyficar, the percentage of women clients dropped three percent over 2007, even though the absolute number of total clients and total female clients rose. This is a trend throughout financial institutions as they become more regulated (Pait, 2009). While there is benefit to providing loans to men, microfinance will not be able to be a complete solution to poverty if it increasingly dismisses the more severely impoverished segments of the population.

Money Cannot Fix Everything

Another complication in evaluating the success of microfinance has to do with the complexity of poverty itself. There are certain contributing factors to poverty in Peru that cannot be fixed solely through loans. Poverty runs deeper than financial instability, and these problems are unaided by microfinance. Certain segments of the population are not able to use loans effectively, and other segments of the population are not targeted by MFIs. As well, the disparity of wealth is characterized by more than just financial ability.

Perhaps one reason why microfinancing has not largely impacted poverty reduction has to do with its classification of the "poor." Microfinance cannot help the disabled, elderly, refugees, and other marginalized groups who are unable to utilize loans (Hulme, 2000). Microfinance typically targets the less-severely impoverished who border the poverty line. These people are considered more reliable and exclude the poorest of the poor. As well, illiterate women head the poorest 15-20 percent of rural households (Thornton, 2008). Therefore, since the percent of women borrowers has been declining, even fewer households have access to credit. Also, since low-income Peruvian women tend to lack financial and literacy skills, it is difficult for them to improve their own situations. The most successful microfinancing entrepreneurs are those who were fairly well off to begin with and have used some of their own resources to expand (Bello, 2006). In general, microfinance is unable to significantly impact the extreme poor, and therefore should not be considered the most effective solution to poverty.

There are many other factors that contribute to the effectiveness of microfinance on alleviating poverty. There is a continual gap between the rich and the poor that has been a result of the long-standing class divisions within Peru dating back to the Spanish conquest in the 1500's (Klarén, 1990). There are gaps in knowledge, technology, and other aspects of life to which the poor, especially in rural areas, have not had access. The lack of technology prevalent in traditional communities hinders those who seek modern solutions to poverty. While this supports the use of microfinancing primarily in urban settings, the rural poor must not be neglected. Money cannot dispose of centuries of social divisions. The societal structure must shift in order to truly alleviate poverty and create a society based on equity.

A One Size Fits All Solution

It is clear that money alone cannot be the solution to alleviating poverty; the problems run deeper than merely access to financial services. While Yunus purports that microfinancing has the ability to efficiently end poverty, after half a century many Peruvians still live in poverty (2006). The current microfinance system is not a sustainable solution to poverty, as it does not address the deeper roots of the problems. Microfinance is not a band-aid solution that can be applied to any situation, given the diversity of people who may seek economic improvement and the context in which they live.

Microfinance may not be an effective tool for everyone. Not all people are equally suited to run their own businesses; not everyone is a good entrepreneur. Despite Yunus's claim that through the "survival skill," willpower can pull anyone out of poverty, if one lacks requisite skills or business sense, this is unlikely (Chavan, 2002). While microfinance claims that it can eliminate poverty, it must recognize that it may not be the best solution for all individuals.

Not only are there certain individuals who are not business minded, but there are also a limited amount of services that can be made profitable, particularly in rural areas with small communities and limited markets. If the community's needs are fulfilled, it will be more difficult to successfully implement a

new business. Certainly in saturated markets or instable markets, it is impossible for all microcredit ventures to succeed (Bello, 2006; Hulme, 2000). In order for poverty to be reduced, rural entrepreneurs must look beyond their regional borders for lucrative markets.

It is also difficult for many businesses to expand. According to a 2001 survey, 88 percent of businesses were low-productivity enterprises that provided income for less than four workers (Pait, 2009). These businesses cannot effectively expand and increase productivity beyond a small-scale enterprise, as they may not be able to transition from a small business to a diversified, larger business. As well, loans are commonly used to purchase basic household necessities rather than being invested in business, thus preventing business growth. This may lead borrowers into further debt if they are then incapable of repaying their loans. Entrepreneurial women may be able to survive on such loans, but it may not be enough to sustainably pull them out of poverty.

THE BOTTOM LINE

It is clear that while microfinance has many benefits, there are also complex consequences to such programs in communities. They have the potential to change power dynamics within households, but they may also worsen power differentials within communities and within homes, leading to the mistreatment of women rather than their empowerment. Continuing the practice of microfinance is a question of balance, as to whether its benefits outweigh its costs.

Microfinance acts as a grassroots means of bringing tangible change to the lives of those in poverty. It provides them with a possible means of improving their own situation, rather than waiting for others to improve it for them. While not all will succeed in such ventures, nor will all want to try, microfinance has the possibility of helping individuals realize their hopes and aspirations. Microfinance can fight not only the economic challenges of poverty, but also the mental and societal challenges. Particularly for women, for whom other opportunities may be scarce, MFIs and their communal approach to lending provide tangible options. They uniquely speak to the needs of women and the roles of women within their communities.

This is not to say that microfinance is a perfect system. It has been clearly demonstrated that it can result in the demoralization, disenfranchisement, and possibly even the death of individuals for whom lending does not provide them with a way out of poverty. There are a number of ways through which MFIs can work towards being part of the sustainable fight against poverty.

First, vigilance and care on the part of MFIs to try to mitigate corruptive practices amongst group members and dissuade and prevent strategic defaulting can address some of microfinance's side effects while still allowing its potential benefits to flourish. Furthermore, recognition and partnership of such institutions with other development strategies to alleviate poverty can make microfinance part of the sustainable solution to poverty. Finally, the creation of skills workshops through microfinance institutions and initiatives to address class inequality in terms of access to technology and education can help fight poverty in the long-run.

CONCLUSION

While microfinance has many benefits, its group lending systems and empowerment of women have caused problems within the communities. Furthermore, microfinance's ability to reach all segments of the population is limited and is not an effective solution to poverty for different groups. It cannot bridge social gaps between the rich and the poor. Understanding the interplay between gender, cultural identity and social welfare is therefore key to evaluating the potential success of a microfinance institution in a community.

The current microfinance system is not effective enough at alleviating widespread and severe poverty. While microfinance loans from banks, government organizations and other large-scale programs

are helpful, they are not effective enough on a wide scale. Large organizations and adapted government policies may make microfinance more widespread, but this is often at the cost of effectiveness on the ground. These organizations may focus on their financial bottom line and lose sight of their ability to create social change. Peru's economy should be prepared to expand along with these businesses and their expansions, as well as the other implications of a rising middle class and a growing formal economy. As well, they must make sure to focus on rural poverty in addition to urban poverty, especially because of the severity of poverty in many rural communities.

Poverty in Peru is a large issue that cannot be solved solely by grassroots efforts. Microfinancing alone cannot bridge the social gap between the rich and the poor and between men and women; this would require large-scale social reforms. A wider system reform must be implemented in order to bridge the wealth disparity. In order for microfinance to permanently impact Peruvians, development must occur at the societal level and not just the individual level. Only then will greater financial stability for the population amount to a true emersion from poverty. This will ensure that the method of reducing of poverty is sustainable.

While microfinancing models in other parts of the world may be more effective at reducing poverty, it does not mean that the same model is transferable to other regions. Microfinancing institutions must consider how their loans affect stability in the home and the societal impacts these loans may have. Different social and political climates may adversely affect these initiatives in unexpected ways. Microfinancing institutions must continue to evolve with the changing times.

While microfinance may not fully pull people out of poverty, it allows some to survive without drastically improving their standard of living (Bello, 2006). Since they would otherwise be worse off, this is an improvement and can contribute to a wider eradication of poverty. Its practices should not be abandoned despite some negative consequences, and, by recognizing these issues, organizations can modify their practices to better serve their clientele. While Yunus may not be right in believing that Peruvian children will visit museums to see what poverty was like, it is a goal worth striving towards.

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Canada's Changing Priorities (2006-2014) and What They Mean For The Promotion of Gender Equality in Development

By: Rebecca Tiessen

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, as part of the Muskoka Initiative, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced that Canada is committed to tackling high maternal and child mortality rates with increased funding for a maternal and child health initiative. In 2013, Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird announced that the Canadian government would "fight the scourge of child, early and forced marriage" in line with the government's priority of "protecting the rights of all girls and helping them fulfil their potential" (Baird, 2013). In light of these important priorities and an international reputation of Canada's commitment to address equality between women and men, what have been Canada's achievements in the promotion of gender equality? In this paper, I argue that in spite of the identification of important issues surrounding women's health and children's rights, the Harper Conservatives have failed to make gender equality their goal, and have instead cast women and girl children as objects of foreign policy discourse. In so doing, we are witnessing: 1. the instrumentalization of women and girls for foreign policy goals; 2. gender essentialism in which women and girl children are exclusively relegated to the status of vulnerable groups in need of charitable efforts; and 3. a re-framing of Canada's role in the world, not as an important development donor but as a charitable state bent on saving 'vulnerable' people. In this paper, I document the erosion of gender equality between 2006 and 2014 under the Harper Conservations beginning with the erasure of the language of gender equality and the adoption of the terminology of equality between women and men. Other important events that have signalled an instrumentalist and charitable approach to development including the highlighting of women's rights as a rationale for defense spending in Afghanistan (Swiss, 2012), the framing of the maternal health initiative (Carrier and Tiessen, 2013) and the 2013 commitments to protecting girl children from early and forced marriage.

The promotion of gender equality has been a priority in Canadian foreign aid dating back to the 1960s when then-CIDA[1] project evaluators took note of the importance of diverse gender roles in communities and the relationship between successful projects and involvement of men and women in the project design and implementation. Canada's formal commitments to address gender equality began with several initiatives that culminated in the development of the Women in Development (WID) and Gender Equity Division in 1994, and a revised and expanded 1984 WID Policy to include the concept of gender equity, effectively creating the 1995 Policy on Women in Development and Gender Equity (DFATD 2013). Several years later, CIDA developed the 1999 Policy on Gender Equality (GE), which explicitly articulated its support for the achievement of equality between women and men to ensure sustainable development in the 21st century (DFATD 2013). In the GE Policy, gender equality was treated as a crosscutting theme and an integral part of all CIDA policies, programs and projects (DFATD 2013). In response to an evaluation of CIDA's gender work, an Action Plan on Gender Equality 2010-2013 was created to guide the Agency in planning, implementation and reporting on gender equality (GE) results. The Action Plan provided opportunities for more and improved gender training for government officials, improved implementation and reporting strategies as well as development education to share results of gender equality programming with Canadians. In addition, a framework and plan of action for the promotion of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) was introduced by Status of Women Canada to further educate many government officials on issues of gender equality and other intersecting identity factors which contribute to inequality and participation in decision-making (such as class, religion, race, etc). The GBA+ was introduced as an analytical tool for the federal government in advancing gender equality

[1] In 2013, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was merged with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to form a new department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD)

in Canada. The training and awareness that is available through this initiative is meant to improve government department efforts to integrate a gender equality (+) perspective into policies, programs and projects. These are all important initiatives carried out at the federal level and demonstrate some capacity at the institutional and individual level to develop gender-sensitive policies.

PROGRAM INITIATIVES ON WOMEN/GIRLS/GENDER BETWEEN 2006 AND 2014

Yet, in spite of these superb guiding frameworks, Canada's policies and program commitments under the Harper Conservatives have done little to promote an agenda of gender equality. Women were employed as instruments in justifying Canada's ongoing mission to Afghanistan, noting that the continuation of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan has been justified partly as Canada's "crucial responsibility" to ensure "that the advances made by Afghan women over the last nine years are not lost" (Oda, 2010). The Muskoka Initiative - or the Maternal and Newborn Health Initiative (MNCH) – was also touted as important program for the advancement of equality between women and men. However, MNCH programs focus primarily on service delivery for women and children in need of healthcare services but do little to address gender inequality in societies that prevent women from accessing these services, nor do they enable women to make choices about their sexual and reproductive health rights (see Carrier and Tiessen, 2013). The maternal health program was introduced by the Canadian government at the same time that we witnessed the gradual disappearance of gender equality language as official reports and policy statements began to replace the terminology of gender equality with equality between men and women (Tiessen and Carrier, forthcoming).

In 2013, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird, make a public commitment to Canada's role in ending early and forced child marriage. There are many reasons to support such an initiative. However, the approach to ending early and forced child marriage is couched in the rhetoric of keeping girls in school at a time when Canada is providing few project funds for primary education. While educational opportunities are indeed important for girls, the framing of this policy suggests that girls who leave school become pregnant and does not account for the large number of girls who become pregnant while in school. In other words, schools are not always the safe haven for girls to protect them from pregnancy and early marriage. Rather, schools can be the site of sexual assault (from boys as well as teachers, principals, and even community members). Without attention to the role that men and masculinities play in perpetuating practices of sexual violence as well as early and forced marriage, programs targeting girls for educational programs will change little. There is an additional link to be made between early and forced marriage and maternal health and that is that complications from pregnancy and giving birth at a young age can result in severe maternal disability or even death. But Baird refused to say whether Canada would fund groups that provide medically necessary abortions to girls who are forced to marry and become pregnant. What is missing from these early commitments to stopping early and forced marriage is a focus on prevention rather than prosecution, efforts to work with governments in developing countries to find local solutions, and efforts to maximize the coordination of efforts of several donors and international aid agencies (the UK government, Plan UK and Plan Canada, to name a few) that have been champions of the ending of early and forced marriage.

CONCLUSION

The limited success of the promotion of gender equality between 2006 and 2014 can be witnessed in several key initiatives promoted under the leadership of the Harper Conservatives, namely the maternal health initiative (MNCH) and the early efforts to address early and forced marriage of girls. Furthermore, the explicit and required shift in language from gender equality to equality between women and men between 2009 and 2013 provides an interesting case of a diminishing commitment to internationally recognized development priorities such as gender equality for many reasons. As the Harper Conservatives set themselves apart from previous governments by changing the policy rhetoric and announcing new initiatives such as the MNCH, a fundamental shift from a development model to a charity approach can be observed: one that is concerned with "saving women" through modern, technological advances without understanding the underlying causes of gender inequality and how they

contribute to women's reproductive health; or 'saving girls' through righteous indignation of international practices involving early and forced marriage of girl children. Furthermore, the changing landscape of Conservative programs that increasingly promote charity towards women and children (such as the MNCH) rather than human rights, equality and development is narrowing the programmatic scope within which gender equality can be discussed. Evidence of the retreat from gender equality can be seen in a variety of ways, including the shift in language, and in concrete initiatives such as the Muskoka – maternal health – Initiative or the initiative to end early and forced (child) marriage. I argue that these recent events demonstrate a step back to Women in Development (WID) thinking and language at best, but increasingly a charity approach: a distinction based on a view that women are the targets of development assistance rather than active participants in their own development.

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Feminism is For Everybody, Except When it Isn't: Contemporary Gender Theory and Oppression in Development

By: Tecla Van Bussel

Abstract - In recent years, postcolonial feminism has criticized the contemporary brand of Western feminism for silencing voices of women of colour and marginalized women, ignoring the implications of race and class intersections in their perspectives. This paper aims to explore the way this misrepresentation of women factors in to international development, first through presentation of perceived and actual gendered workloads in small-scale agriculture. Secondly, an examination of gender quotas increasing women's access to political office in developing countries and their effect on the politicization of gender issues will be discussed. Analysis of the axes of oppression faced by women in the developing world will conclude this paper, with a look at the way these axes affect representation in the feminism movement. The future of development must allow space for consideration of disparate female voices in order to effectively implement social, political and economic development initiatives.

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

The complex and multifaceted interpretations of feminism and its relentless pursuit of gender equality have without fail been the target of a vast amount of criticism throughout history, and with the push for global social and economic development in the modern age, today is no exception. Feminists are notoriously and sometimes undeservedly identified as a very vocal and visual social group; the image that comes to mind for most in North America is the bra-burning feminists of the 1960s, though this is only one limited representation of a very diverse movement. Passionately working in what seemed to be the background for decades, postcolonial feminists and the Third Wave are now more openly criticizing the contemporary brand of Western 'Feminism' rooted in dominant European and North American social thought. These postcolonial feminists assert that traditional Western Feminism is not and cannot be globally representative of all women or other people who identify with the feminist movement. Voices of middle- and upper-class white women are most prominent in this traditional feminism, limiting the agency and ability of women of colour to bring their stories to the table and therefore ignoring race and class intersections of oppression that contribute to significant differences in the way feminism manifests itself. This admittedly problematic hierarchy of female voices bleeds, intentionally or not, into the study and application of international development. The inherent positions of economic and political power that many development projects stem from, particularly in Europe and North America, limits their ability to truly encompass and prioritize perspectives of women living in the countries and communities they so desire to help.

The crucial importance of the focus on gender in the developing world and how contextual awareness of feminist perspectives applies to development studies will be analyzed in this essay by presentation of case studies and critical feminist literature. Traditional female roles and gender expectations will be examined first – especially in developing agricultural economies. Secondly, the growing trend of women in positions of political power in developing countries – and the implications of this trend – will be addressed. Thirdly, the axes of oppression faced by women in the developing world will be discussed as well as how these axes affect their representation in the feminism movement. These components form the basis of the argument that women in the Global South are underrepresented and misunderstood in modern Western feminism, and this lack of meaningful representation has potentially dire consequences in the push for social, political and economic development in these areas. Feminism and development are both topics that incite strong personal opinion wherein negativity and stubbornness are unfortunately far too common. This essay does not intend to encompass all aspects of feminism, or all aspects of development, nor is it meant to negate and speak over the different lived

experiences of individual women in both the developed and developing world. It is simply one aspect of the important discussion on the form contemporary feminism takes in international development studies.

UNDERSTANDING GENDER ROLES AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Especially in the developing world, a genuine understanding of gender workloads, relations and norms is very important; development projects implemented by Western institutions often have overtly well-meaning goals but have potential to increase stress and burden on already overworked women. Wrongful assumptions made by Western feminist theory can contribute to misinformed ideas about what is best for women and their diverse roles in agriculture work in developing countries. Interpretation of research from rural areas in Honduras, by Lauren Classen, et al. (2008), and India, by Dr. Elizabeth Finnis (2009) and G. Rajamma (1993), can shed light on the complexities of this issue. Grasping the dynamics of gender roles through local 'insider' perspectives, and not preconceived 'outsider' notions of gender and oppression often espoused by Western feminism, can aid in the success of development projects and their incorporation of marginal groups (Classen et al., 2008). This lesson from rural Honduras can also be applied elsewhere, as understanding social dynamics from within the society itself is key for development in any context.

The theme of gender and/as development, explored by Finnis (2009), focused on one example of this relationship between understanding gender and its impact on the success of development initiatives – the role of women in rural farming households in the Kolli Hills region of India. In a time of rapid, globalized, and intensive agricultural change and economic development since the Green Revolution of the 1960s, many small-scale farmers in developing countries, including Honduras and India, are transitioning from subsistence farming to farming of hybridized seeds for supposed increased yields, or cash crops for income production (Classen et al., 2008). In the Kolli Hills, this means a change from growing traditional coarse grain food crops such as millet to growing crops like sweet cassava for market production, in part due to the devaluation of coarse grain crops on the market (Finnis, 2009). For women in rural communities, whose contributions to agriculture are enormous and yet often chronically overlooked, there is frequently what has been termed a *double burden* of household work and childcare on top of heavy manual labour on a farm with virtually zero mechanization (Finnis, 2009). The switch from millet to cassava production means less time and energy spent by women processing millets for consumption as a primary food source, leaving more time for domestic work or other activities. In the context of the Kolli Hills region, the shift towards farming for industrial purposes may actually have specific positive local implications such as reduced manual labour and decreased stress on women's gender roles (Finnis, 2009). Nevertheless, one must be aware that there are additional aspects to be considered beyond these findings; the decline in coarse grain production in favour of cash crops like cassava can be seen as a detriment to regional food security, even while the local level interpretation of women within these contexts may view the switch as positive in terms of labour intensiveness.

This conclusion of the improvement of gender workloads based on economic development is very situation-specific and continued research into different regional contexts for development and its impact on traditional gender roles is essential. As stated previously, understanding gender and its consequences for development is multifaceted and complex. An opposing position to Finnis' findings of improved gender workloads can be found in G. Rajamma's research; Rajamma is a former Oxfam Policy Officer in Bangalore, India. In examining one individual woman's lived experience in the Tumkur district of southern India, Rajamma (1993) concluded transitioning from subsistence farming to cash crop farming in fact negatively impacted female workloads and widened the gender equality gap.

Traditionally, most subsistence crops such as cereals and coarse grains were produced for the community's own consumption, and labour was compensated either with food and other goods or services such as equivalent labour, and less commonly in cash. With production of crops such as groundnut, cotton, and mulberry for profit on the market, the gap between male and female earnings has widened due to societal norms such as males being able to demand a higher wage for farm labour (Rajamma, 1993). Furthermore, real net income for farmers has not increased as predicted because in

addition to the uncertainty of market prices, cash crops using industrialized hybrid seeds need more funding for capital inputs previously unnecessary for local subsistence crops, such as new technology and expensive pesticides. Testimony from women in the Tumkur district contradict Finnis' (2009) findings from the Kolli Hills, saying they found that they now have less time to fulfill other responsibilities because there is pressure to increase individual work time to generate maximum economic gains (Rajamma, 1993).

Evidently, there is more to the story of agricultural development than simply a supposed increase in income for people in the Global South, and every situation is contextual; what is beneficial to women in some areas, as seen in the Finnis (2009) study, may not confer the same advantages in other areas. Considerations of food security implications, gender workload implications, and societal appropriateness therefore need to be included in development initiatives that intend to create economic benefit for developing countries. In order to promote new policies that seek to better a community or a nation, Western feminists must be aware of the dangers of generalizing female experiences in developing countries by assuming knowledge of contextual gender roles. This need for diversification in understanding applies not only to agricultural development, but perhaps even more importantly to the realm of feminist political theory. Dismantling the 'patriarchal state' and its antiquated construction of gender through inclusion of women across all social, economic and racial groups is a lofty goal, and as detailed by analysis of feminist politics in the coming section, is not quite as close within reach as it may seem.

FEMINIST POLITICS AND REPRESENTATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

True developmental change stems from engaging people in meaningful action at all levels of society, yet access to leadership positions and participation in politics continues to be an issue of concern for women in all countries of the world. According to recent data collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2013), women lead as the head of government in only twenty countries and account for only 21.3 percent of parliamentarians around the world. Increasing the number of women in positions of political power is expected to have positive effects on women's unity and political advocacy in both developed and developing countries (Hassim, 2009). Since the *United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women* in Beijing in 1995, the implementation of gender quotas has been a popular method for developing countries to bring a greater number of women into political leadership roles. In an ideal world, "quotas encourage broader social and cultural changes, because they help to build support for women's political action as well as encouraging changes in people's perceptions about gender relations" (Sacchet, 2008, p. 370).

The question remains whether mandatory exposure to female politicians through gender quotas can really alter social norms of gender stereotypes and oppression. The other underlying assumption made by ardent supporters of gender quotas is that these female politicians, because of their gender, will automatically subvert patriarchal norms (Hassim, 2009). In reality, not all women are pro-feminism; many women strongly abide by androcentric and/or classist ideologies and values, or lack inclusion of diverse voices in their feminist approaches. In this sense, having women serve in these leadership roles can in fact have little political implication for the betterment of girls and women. This is especially concerning for the indigenous and the rural poor, who are often the most marginalized women in their communities and whose activism and agency is crucial for the politicization of gender issues (Sacchet, 2008).

The enduring political gender disparity in both developed nations and developing countries where women are legally entitled vote and run for public office can be seen as a consequence of voter and party bias and attitudes that favour male candidates (Beaman, Chattopadhyay, Duflo, Pande, & Topalova, 2009). Results from a study in the West Bengal state of India, where one third of positions in each village council and one third of chief councillor positions across the state are randomly reserved for women, have shown that villagers still prefer male leaders. Furthermore, voters have negatively biased prior assumptions on the effectiveness of female leaders, sometimes solely based on their gender if they

have identical hypothetical political performance as a male leader (Beaman et al., 2009). However, forced reservations of positions for women makes male villagers associate women with leadership even if they are not necessarily more sympathetic to the idea of female politicians as a whole, and "by giving voters a chance to learn about the effectiveness of women leaders, they have effectively improved women's access to political office" (Beaman et al., 2009, p. 1533). This mandatory exposure to female leaders can have positive impacts on the second generation of female politicians running for office; women are more likely to stand for and win elected positions in councils where there has been a female councillor in previous elections, and negative stereotypes of female roles in the public and domestic spheres can be weakened (Beaman et al., 2009). Something to bear in mind is that gender discrimination in West Bengal is considered less extreme than in some other Indian states; these results could be interpreted as a moderate success for women in the country as a whole but does not consider the experiences of women in other states and their access to political office.

Cultural and social outcomes of gender quotas in politics are rarely taken into account when evaluating their effectiveness; often Western feminists and development theorists dangerously assume that more women in politics automatically means progress toward greater gender equality (Hassim, 2009). This means that the influence of a greater number of female leaders in developing countries is often not actually being evaluated in terms of their impact on the rest of the diverse female population crossing both class and race lines (Sacchet, 2008). One aspect of this dilemma is *elite capture*, the phenomenon that women of higher social class most often hold positions of political power, leaving out voices of lower class or indigenous women. Supporters of political gender quotas cite the concept of *critical mass* as a motivator; this concept advocates that even though discrimination and oppression may undermine the confidence of women to assert themselves, with greater numbers comes a greater collective voice (Sacchet, 2008). However, the women who hold positions within local political groups may not be the best representatives for the majority of the female population in the developing world. Sacchet (2008) states both male and female politicians must be aware of gender inequalities and willing to take them on board in their advocacy and legislative efforts in order to truly provide a space for women to discuss gender issues as well as connect their experiences to other areas of oppression. Overall, these examples of political access and representation can be tied back to the initial argument motivating this paper; without a proper understanding of local context for women within communities in developing countries, their supposed 'inclusion' in the fight for gender equality may be founded in nothing more than the assumption that one female voice can inclusively speak for all women.

POST-COLONIAL FEMINISM AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The silencing of certain voices in the contemporary feminism movement, extending beyond the political domain discussed in the previous section, can be encapsulated in one thought-provoking quote from bell hooks, the notable black feminist:

> All too frequently in the women's movement it was assumed one could be free of sexist thinking by simply adopting the appropriate feminist rhetoric; it was further assumed that identifying oneself as oppressed freed one from being an oppressor. (1984, p. 8 – 9)

Western schools of thought have traditionally dominated gender discourse, contributing to a historical mistrust of white women and their actions in development projects in communities of women of colour. In terms of intersections of racial oppression in development studies, white women often assume that they have the knowledge and obligation to aid 'other' women, whether these women need and want it or not (Syed & Ali, 2011). The inherent racial privilege of white feminists, regardless of other types of oppression they may experience, can lead to the negation of voices of women of colour in feminist discourse if this privilege is not acknowledged and an effort is not made to understand and subvert this dynamic. Even women of colour in positions of political power in the developing world, some are instructed in or influenced by the dominant Western feminist dialogue, thereby perpetuating this racial and classist oppression.

In development discourse especially, women of colour have a tendency to be treated as a homogenous uniform category instead of individuals with their own diverse experiences involving abuse across boundaries of class and ethnicity as well as gender, creating the stereotype of a 'Third World Woman' that is caught in an extremely oppressive and limiting environment. Dr. Cheryl McEwan (2001) elaborates:

> Feminist writings about women in the South, therefore, risk falling into the trap of cultural essentialism. The resulting portraits of 'Western women', 'Third World Women', 'African women', 'Indian women', 'Muslim women', 'post-communist women', or the like, as well as the picture of the 'cultures' that are attributed to these various groups of women, often remain fundamentally essentialist. (p. 99)

It is therefore necessary to take a more holistic view of women's experiences and challenges to identify contextual and systemic factors such as race and class barriers that may be ignored otherwise (McEwan, 2001). This 'holistic view' can nevertheless be a double-edged sword; identifying intersections of oppression is critical, but one must be careful to avoid generalizations of these intersections, because the experiences of an individual cannot be extrapolated to assume the experiences of a community of people.

Believing that one individual can be representative of an entire diverse group can have damaging implications, as evidenced earlier in the discussion of female politicians and representation of their constituents. Postcolonial feminism, which demands consideration of the 'other' non-dominant and non-Western perspective, has made important contributions to unpacking development discourse and its power dynamics that have very real implications for both men and women (McEwan, 2001). The struggle for women's human rights cannot be removed from the struggles for a better life by both men and women in developing societies where poverty and a lack of freedom and democratic norms is evident (Syed & Ali, 2011). Considering the theme of this paper, it must be clarified that simply acknowledging these dynamics of race and class, which are often inextricably linked to the struggles of women in developing countries, is not enough; actively incorporating them into Western feminist thought is a hurdle that needs to be overcome if the field of development is to be truly inclusive and progressive.

FEMINISM FOR THE FUTURE

While certain issues such as misogyny, sexual exploitation and gender oppression may unite women cross-culturally, issues of power, race, class, and other forms of oppression cannot be ignored. In analyzing opposing perspectives on the dimensions of gender and development, the conclusion can be drawn that women in developing world, especially women of colour, are continually misrepresented by the 'umbrella' of Western feminism, and that this has a negative impact on overarching development goals such as economic growth and social equality. The ignorance of the variety of traditional female roles in many developing countries, both those in the home and in agricultural labour, tends to limit the scope and success of development projects (Finnis, 2009). Additionally, the connection between a greater number of women in political power in these countries and the tangible impacts on policy change for gender equality is tenuous: to cite an example from two African nations, "it could be argued that in both Uganda and Rwanda, women's representation provided a kind of alibi for the progressive, 'democratic' nature of new governments that at their core nevertheless remained authoritarian" (Hassim, 2009, p. 223). Finally, the Westernized language of discourse in both development and feminist studies can throw a homogenizing blanket over racial and cultural diversity within both disciplines, ignoring different sources of oppression and the ways people experiencing these struggles endeavour to overcome them.

As Western feminism attempts to deliver 'change' to women of colour in the developing world, Jawad Syed and Faiza Ali (2011) remind us that:

> If feminism is about social change, white feminism—a feminism of assimilation, of gentle reform and of strengthening the institutions that are instrumental to economic exploitation and white supremacy, of ignorance and appropriation of the work of feminists of colour—is an oxymoron. (p. 361)

In closing, Western feminism is simply another form of local knowledge that is limited by its privileges and position in the global community. In order to work effectively in for the future of the development field, feminism needs to allow for more competing and disparate voices among women of all race, class, economic, social, and cultural backgrounds.

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Creating The "Femimonster": A Reflection on Internalized Hypermasculinities and Building Community in The Campos of The Dominican Republic

By: Courtney Vaughan

Abstract - The purpose of this paper is to explore how the author has internalized hypermasculinities, and how she was forced to confront this reality during her experience learning and volunteering abroad in the Dominican Republic through the Canadian non-profit, Intercordia. The reflection elaborates on how this internalization affected relationship building. The author explores the social construction of gender, the relationship of the "masculine" to power, drawing upon Jean Vanier's understanding of weakness and vulnerability in order to transcend these social constructions and create a more holistic self and community. She concludes that embracing vulnerability and weakness, which are often feminized qualities, are paramount in transforming the social structures of today.

> We're this mixture of incredible beauty, capacity to do incredibly beautiful things and also this incredible fear of being crushed so we have this tension inside of us somewhere to prove that I am the best and at the same time this fear that maybe I don't exist. I have to discover inside myself all those powers where I'm pushing people away to prove that I am okay (Vanier 2009).

"For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be someone else's first, but I have never had that one best friend that everyone else had. I had a lot of great friends, but was always number two. I think it scares me to open myself to that again: to make someone my first only to be their second. I don't have one incredibly good friend, I have many good ones. I have never had a serious relationship, and quite frankly, have avoided them for the last four years. There is not one person who I make an effort to see every single week, let alone every day. It appears that I have subconsciously avoided creating strong, dependent, vulnerable relationships because I fear being hurt, being rejected: letting someone become my first only to be their second. If I give my all to someone, and they only give me half of what they can, I am left needing. It is scary to be unfulfilled. It is scary to lose the comfort of control."

As is evident from the above excerpt from my journal, I have been and am currently working through a process of understanding my own relationship with weakness and vulnerability. Although the current Euroamerican society in which I live promotes the discourse of strength, power, and independence as that which is good, I have recently been given the opportunity through my experience with the Canadian non-profit, Intercordia, to reflect on the validity (or lack thereof) of this discourse. Intercordia is a non-profit organization that partners with Canadian universities to provide students with a university accredited and engaged learning experience. As a participant, I was sent to one of their international partners, in the mountainous region of the Dominican Republic, to live for three months with a campesino family and volunteer within the reforestation brigades initiated by the local campesino cooperative, La Federacion de Campesinos Hacia el Progreso (the Federation of Rural Farmers towards Progress). Intercordia, which was founded with Jean Vanier's philosophy in mind, encourages students to rethink their relationship with weakness, vulnerability, and community. As Vanier writes, we humyns[1] are an "extraordinary mixture of weakness and strength, ignorance and wisdom, light and darkness, love and hate" (2012). By placing them in situations of dissonance and vulnerability, students are encouraged

[1] I choose to spell "human" as "humyn"to repudiate the male centeredness of the English language. It is crucial to recognize the effects language has on our way of knowing. The goal is to perform a breaching experiment of sorts which disrupts the male centeredness within the word 'human'In doing so, I hope to encourage people to question unidentified, patriarchal norms of Euroamerican society.

to embrace a more holistic self, one which accepts her or his own weaknesses and vulnerabilities and sees value in them. This, however, proves to be quite the challenge for me.

For years, I have put significant effort into making myself appear intelligent, physically strong, unemotional, outgoing, and independent. I would always place emphasis on the fact that I was unemotional, that I had the ability to do things that "girls shouldn't do": I could fish, hunt, climb, hit, play, think, and speak like a man. Nothing made me happier than being deemed an "honorary bro" by my friends who were young men. I must emphasize that one should be able to express her or his gender in any way she or he pleases; that being said, I consciously suppressed certain feminized qualities while interacting with my male friends and colleagues. Within this paper, I will demonstrate how I have internalized hypermasculinities in order to maintain power and avoid vulnerability, and how my experience abroad forced me to confront this reality. I will also explore how through acknowledging one's own weaknesses, growth as an individual as well as within a community can occur.

Before I continue in this exploration, I must first position myself to you, dear reader, on the spectrum of power and privilege in order for you to gain a deeper understanding of what internal environment I am struggling and my relationship with my external environments. I am a white, Euroamerican, cisgendered, heterosexual, able-bodied, able-minded, middle-class, educated female who was raised in a stable home in a stable country in a nuclear family. This is the lens through which I see and interpret the world. I share this with you, the reader, in order for you to consider my bias while reading this paper.

One may notice upon reading my identities that each identity leaves me in a relative state of privilege apart from my identity as a womyn. This is the identity which I will be exploring today. It is not simply sex; having a vagina does not make me a womyn. As Coston and Kimmel explain, "doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'" (2012). One is not *a* gender, but is *gendered* by society and the self. With this understanding of gender, I choose to express the gender of womyn within this paper. I also choose to use the terms "feminised" and "masculinised" because it is important to consider that traits and qualities which are typically associated with womyn and men are not inherently female or male but are constructed as such.

In today's society, gender is created to be a noun. One is either born a womyn or a man, a girl or a boy: it is something that is normalized as a dichotomy. This is problematic in many ways. Consider primarily that there are many forms of gender expression that do not simply conform to notions of what a "womyn" or a "man" should be. Further consider that through this suppression of gender expression that one ought not to express themselves in a way which does not conform to these gender norms, or else she or he will be ostracized by her or his society. It is also incredibly problematic as, within this dichotomy presented, man equates to that which is brave, dependable, strong, emotionally stable, critical, logical, and rational (Coston and Kimmel 2012), all qualities which are prized within the current Euroamerican society. This gives men, or those who embrace masculinised qualities, wealth and power, or as Coston and Kimmel label it, "hegemonic masculinity" (2012).

This is contrasted with the womyn and her feminized qualities: weak, emotional, irrational, unintelligent, and dependent. Not only does this suppress one from fully expressing themselves for fear of acting outside of her or his own gender norms, but this also removes agency from a womyn, as they are not allowed to act and think without the help and protection of a man. However, the problem with this dichotomy which I would like to further investigate is the notion that the feminized qualities are constructed, within this society, to be undesirable. By demonizing these qualities, one is not able to see the value in vulnerability, the naturalness of being emotional, and the need for interdependency. One, within this frame of values, is not able to appreciate the reality of being fully humyn.

Those who do not fit the constructed gendered norms often attempt to compensate this "abnormality" through expressing themselves in certain ways in order to regain power. Coston and

Kimmel discuss how men who are “othered”, be they gay, working class, or disabled, have learned to cope with their oppression through over-conforming to the dominant view of masculinity by being hypermasculine (2012).

> Men with physical disabilities have to find ways to express themselves within the role of “disabled.” Emotional expression is not compatible with the aforementioned traits [brave, dependable, strong, emotionally stable, critical, logical, and rational] because it signifies vulnerability; in this way, men, especially disabled men, must avoid emotional expression. If they fail in stoicism, discrimination in the form of pejorative words (“cripple”, “wimp”, “retard”) are sometimes used to suppress or condemn the outward expressions vulnerability (p. 4).

This internalization of valuing masculinity is not only present within othered men, but is a reality within our entire society. It is not the masculinity in and of itself, but the power that comes along with it, that makes it desirable. This internalization is even present within females; they learn to internalize their own oppression. Pease (2010) describes internalized oppression as “the incorporation and acceptance by individuals within an oppressed group of the prejudices against them within the dominant society” (p. 5). Subordinate groups then perpetuate their own oppression and marginalization by internalizing this belief set. This creates what Antonio Gramsci deems ‘ideological hegemony’: the maintenance of the dominant group’s position by charming the hearts and minds of those who are exploited (Pease 2010). The subordinate group believes that those who have worth are those who belong to the ideals; thereby reducing their own worth (Pratto and Stewart 2012, p. 31). Their desire to belong becomes the desire to be a part of the norm, and to despise the part of themselves that is not (Pratto and Stewart 2012, p. 32).

I, unfortunately, have learned to internalize my own oppression. As othered men have learned to do, I too partook in this internalization of hypermasculinities in order to gain power and legitimacy in this “man’s world”. Before Intercordia, I simply wanted to be considered an equal within this world. I wanted to achieve, within myself and within others’ perceptions of me, the status of a man. I was constantly being delegitimized solely because of my gender; I wanted respect for my ability, strength, intelligence, and power. It is evident within the ways I live and act today: priding myself on my strength, my intelligence, and my independence. I learned to stop crying. I learned to speak before I listened. I learned to sympathize but forgot to empathize. I lost the ability to receive. My experience in Intercordia helped me realize this because it pushed me up against a system of patriarchy which was much more obvious than that of my own. Perhaps it was more obvious because I was in a new environment, thus more aware. Perhaps it was more obvious because it expressed itself in a way that was less covert than the patriarchy that exists in Euroamerican societies. Comparing the disparity between men and womyn’s wages in North America, for example, is a little more complex and concealed than an adage in the Dominican which says, “She can cook, she’s ready to be wed.” The expression is light, but almost prideful in a way: it essentially tells me that the worth of a womyn is to cook and to be a good wife. Though North America has its fair share of “kitchen jokes”, I reacted more strongly to the constant cat calls and my host mother telling me I could not climb a tree because I am not a man. This difference in my reaction was likely a result of my being directly confronted with the more obviously expressed gender roles of the Dominican society.

As a response to this more obvious patriarchy, I found an immense desire to fight the expectations of my gender and be seen as an equal to a man in order to gain credibility in my new environment. This desire actualized itself quite robustly in the machismo culture of the Dominican Republic. It dominated my thoughts and actions; I found that everything I did was an act to prove that I was worthy. I refused to take people’s hands of help when walking up mountains and literally played tug-of-war with people when they tried to carry my bags for me. I was attempting to reassert my power within a relationship in which I was forced to be weak. I can now see, as Vanier discusses, that this expression of strength and power worked to separate me from people (Locklin 2010), but at the time, I saw myself in the right. I became a self-proclaimed “femimonster”.

One moment which exemplifies this internalized oppression and inability to accept being vulnerable happened two weeks into the program. I had been feeling debilitated by my host-family and community. Upon learning about the different international partners of Intercordia, I became immediately interested in the Dominican Republic because it incorporated outdoor agricultural work as part of the experience. I was thrilled to begin my summer of hiking up mountains, using machetes, and getting fit. Unfortunately, the shock, disappointment, and, quite frankly, anger, resonated when I was only permitted to partake in physical work twice a week, even though my host-brother could go every day. I failed to recognize that my newcomer status might influence this, considering my womyn colleagues went to work every day. From my perspective, everyone was overreacting when a bug bite emerged on my skin; my hands began to blister and my health, to them, was depleting. I was convinced it was simply because I was a fragile womyn. In reality, it is likely that my host-family and colleagues did not want to force a stranger (at the time) into daily labour-intensive work – they did not want to scare me away. This, however, I failed to acknowledge. “If I were a man,” I said, “They would let me do whatever the hell I wanted.”

I was rather exhausted and irritated with people attempting to tell me that I could not go to work because my body was not accustomed to the work or the heat. As a strong and independent womyn, I knew my body and that of which it is capable. I felt my agency was being taken from me, and could not bear it. So I began to hide my weaknesses in order to be given agency. I attempted to hide my blisters, and was sure to never wince or show exhaustion after a long day. One day, I felt particularly sick. I had not eaten supper the night before, and ate very little for breakfast the next day. My host-mother was already suspicious when I left for work. At work, I gave the food to my colleagues so that my host-mother would not see that I was not eating. Upon returning home, I showered, and, although lunch was on the table, I ignored it and went to my room to rest off my feelings of illness.

My host-mother then peaked through the window to ensure that I was in an acceptable state. She asked me if I did not like her food (which would be a terrible offense to a Dominican mother), and I responded that I was not hungry. She asked me if I was feeling sick, and I said no. She replied that she did not believe me. Mothers know. Finally, I let me guard down and confessed that I was experiencing discomfort in my stomach. I ensured her that it was not serious, and that I just needed sleep, but she proceeded to insist as she left my room that I was being ridiculous and that I had to take some pills that she had for me and relax. Eventually, she returned with a cup of water and some tablets. I took them, and sure enough, felt better within a few hours.

I could not appreciate more the care that my mother gave me that day. That being said, the effect my stubborn power games played on my family was something that I had failed to consider. The next day, my family and I sat down and they told me how disappointed they were that I attempted to hide my illness from them. They told me that I was a part of their family now, and that I needed to allow them to take care of me. It worried them that I was now their responsibility, yet I would not allow them to be responsible for me: they feared that I would do something irrational out of my need for independence. The shock I experienced was profound; I had been so bound in my own understanding of self that I could not conceptualize how someone else could be responsible for my health or even feel that burden. I had to learn then that I depended on these people, and that depending on them is not a bad thing. Being weak and needing is not negative. In this particular instance, my desire for strength and power had divided us, and it was only through accepting my weakness that we could be united. As Vanier (2004) describes, the state of dependence allows a “communion of hearts” in which “each gives and each receives, each becomes vulnerable to the other” (p. 3). When power is the core in a relationship, competition becomes the focus. When vulnerability is the core, a more holistic, interdependent, and cooperative relationship can be created. Within this relationship framework, we are all able to give (which makes us feel special and needed) and we are all receiving. No one hungers because they are always being given to, and everyone feels gracious because they are giving. All needs, spiritual and physical, are met.

Upon completing Intercordia, I have learned the importance of reclaiming my “femininity”. A “man’s world” is inherently imbalanced. We can see that within our current polity, economy, and society. Our environment is being destroyed; there is a constant reality of war and violent conflict within the world; we live in fear; disparity has risen exponentially. We do not need more “masculinity” in this world. Through Intercordia, I have learned that what is truly needed within myself and within this world is a balance of qualities which have been either “masculinised” or “feminised” by our society. I must embrace stereotypically “feminine” characteristics within myself and within others. I must work towards embracing within myself and projecting to the world a holistic humyn being, one who has feminised and masculinised characteristics; one who does not fear vulnerabilities. The understanding will then come, within myself and within others, that these qualities are neither masculine, nor feminine, but humyn. By embracing this, I will be more fully able to actualize my whole humyn self, and encourage others to do the same.

We must realize the dangers of placing the pressure of perfection upon ourselves: “When we cling to personal power and success, when we are frightened of losing social status, then we are in some way denying our humanity” (Vanier 2008, p. 108). In reality, qualities of strength, weakness, dependence, independence, empathy, and pride, are characteristics which dwell within all humyn beings. All of these qualities can be good if balanced. We humyns are a wide array of emotions, attitudes, and realities, and once we can embrace this complexity, but realize that within this complexity we are all truly the same, we can transcend difference and collectively strive towards a better society: we were all born fragile, live lives of fragility, and die fragilely (Vanier 2012). In this sense, fragility is good, as it brings people together across differences. “Societies that give the greatest value to individual success and competition tend to belittle the weak. There’s a great risk that we’ll forget that humanity is a body where each of us – weak or strong – has a place and something to give others” (Vanier 2004, p.4). Our worth is not within our qualities that we share with the world; our worth is not within our abilities to produce and succeed; our worth is bound in the simple fact that we are humyn, each of us with the ability to both give and receive. Once this principle can be realized by the masses, a paradigm shift can occur.

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Solidarity Across Borders: An International Volunteer Experience

By: Ashley Rerrie

They hissed at me, made kissing motions at me, and called me "muñeca" (doll).

> "I told [my host sister] about it later, the guys catcalling on the street. She said it was cute, and that she feels bad for Nicaraguan girls who don't get attention because they're 'ugly'. I wonder if this is just another aspect of the machismo culture - the same way women call other women sluts to degrade them in our culture, or how some women say that they aren't feminists" (Personal journal entry, May 6, 2012).

In the summer of 2012, I spent three months living and volunteering in and around the city of Estelí, Nicaragua. Those three months of international volunteer work taught me a lot about what it means to stand beside people and for people to support one another. Through these experiences, I was able to connect my time volunteering as a young woman to the concept of solidarity across borders.

As a young feminist interested in international development and feminism, I often hear terms such as intersectionality and solidarity. Intersectionality is a term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) to describe "the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color" (p. 1244). However, Crenshaw also calls for the use of intersectionality in broader feminist and antiracist practice (p. 1242-43). My experience in Nicaragua has helped to shape my understanding of these terms in a way that I believe was only accessible to me as a young woman. In the above excerpt from my journal, I was attempting to articulate my feelings of confusion about the way that machismo culture operates in Nicaragua. Cat-calling and other forms of street harassment manifest in different forms in the smaller Canadian cities where I have lived than they did in my experiences of Nicaragua. I felt taken aback, offended, and sometimes threatened when I was confronted with instances of this harassment; I could not understand why my host sister felt bad for girls who did not have to deal with it.

In this situation, however, saying to my host sister that street harassment is bad/offensive/degrading would not have been helpful. I puzzled over street harassment throughout the rest of the summer, trying to understand why a behavior I took to be offensive was acceptable and even desirable to my host sister. In time, I came to realize that trying to understand *why* she believed that women need to be cat-called to have a sense of validation of their beauty or their intrinsic worth was more productive. Upon my return to Canada, I began reading more about feminist theory and asking myself what it looks like to support women across borders. Reading my experience in Nicaragua through a lens of intersectionality, I am beginning to learn that oppression manifests itself differently in different parts of the globe. For example, while I was cat-called more in Nicaragua, young men in clubs in Canada seem to feel more entitlement to my body. I believe that part of the difference between the two is that the attention I receive in Nicaragua is also related to my visible foreignness, and therefore my Western privilege. However, this tension between different manifestations of patriarchy does not mean that as feminists we cannot work together against it as a system of oppression.

While intersectional theory has spread in feminist discourse, I think that more work needs to be done to engage meaningfully in intersectional practice. Of course, my own practice of recognizing intersectionality still needs work. However, witnessing the lives of other young Nicaraguan women helped me to grasp a more concrete understanding of the concept that goes beyond simply knowing on some abstract level that oppressions intertwine, interact, and shape the way that women live their lives. I lived beside my host sister, who had to balance being a woman, a mother, a wife, and working in a rural community. Speaking with her about some of her concerns about raising her son while she was not

earning an income showed me some of the intersections in her life of gender and class in a way that I would never have been able to grasp theoretically as a middle-class, Canadian university student. In turn, I saw how my experiences also shaped my life. This shift in thinking was only possible through my engagement with my host sister in a loving, non-judgmental way, and a rereading of my experience through different feminist texts that pointed out my own privileged and sometimes ethnocentric thinking. My learning took place not just in Nicaragua, but in reflecting on the important things that my time in Nicaragua taught me once back in Canada.

Intersectional activism is vital if feminists are to achieve anything. Alliances between women must take place in the real world, rather than just in an abstract sphere of "shoulds," and require that feminists participate in an ongoing reflection on what sort of relationships they are engaged in. My experiences in Nicaragua as a young woman living beside other young women were important for me because it taught me a lot about what solidarity *looks and feels like*, not just what it sounds like. As Chandra Mohanty (1984) states, "Beyond sisterhood there is still racism, colonialism, and imperialism!" (p. 348). Although as women, we have common experiences of oppression, as feminist activists we must recognize that the lived experiences of women are also shaped by ongoing racism, colonialism, and class differences. We must avoid reducing the experience of "Third World women" (or "women" in general) to one homogenous monolith. The challenges that women face are shaped by their unique location at the intersection of different global forces; our struggles are not identical, and trying to solve problems based on assumed sameness does more harm than good. Through my analysis of this experience, I now have a broader understanding of what solidarity means to me. It means being understanding and inclusive of difference, and listening to women about their experiences and perspectives, rather than speaking for them or over them. It means practicing feminist activism in a way that underscores the fact that our liberation is tied up with one another, and that none of us are truly free until we all are. It means lifting all women up with us, rather than standing on the backs of marginalized voices to make further gains for the privileged. Solidarity across borders is a constant practice, not just a level one can reach. Rather than being reductive of the lived experiences of women in an effort to fight patriarchal oppression, we must engage in the constant practice of trying to understand what solidarity across borders and difference might look like.

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Acknowledgements: First and foremost, the author would like to acknowledge his fellow interns Mitalie Makhani, Dawn Cordeiro, and Gonee Saini. The author must acknowledge and thank Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute and the Canadian International Development Agency for respectively organizing and funding the internship program. Lastly, the author would like to acknowledge the NGO in Tamil Nadu that hosted the internship, however has chosen not to mention the organization by name due to the sensitive and personal nature of the article.

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Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Sarah Peltier for her exceptional advice, patience, and constant encouragement throughout the revision process.

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Acknowledgements: I would like to acknowledge a number of individuals whose valuable input assisted in the completion of this thesis. Special thanks to professors Jon Sears and Ruth Rempel for their guidance and direction with the development of the thesis topic and its content. I would also like to thank my peer reader for reviewing my work on the thesis. Finally, I would like to extend my thanks to family and friends for their support and encouragement.

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Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Katie MacDonald and Thomas Parkhill for their careful eyes and suggestions about the piece.

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Acknowledgements: I would like to acknowledge the phenomenal women mentors I have been privileged to work with in my university career: Professor Jessica Vorstermans, Dr. Pamela Cushing, Dr. Allyson Larkin, Dr. Megan Shore, Dr. Jacquie Newman, Professor Sadie Buck, and Melanie Quevillon. You have all inspired me in many ways and have encouraged me to walk on a journey to a more holistic self and a more holistic relationship with the world. I would also like to thank my community at La Federacion de Campesinos Hacia el Progreso for welcoming me into their community and being patient with me on this extraordinary journey.

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During her 2003 to 2007 posting as Counsellor to the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations in New York, Diana sat on the Advisory Committee of UNIFEM and on the governing Bureau of UNICEF and was a key player in Canada's successful involvement in the global effort that created UN Women. Diana has made significant contributions to numerous international efforts focused on women's empowerment, including as Chair of the OECD Working Party on Gender Equality from 1998-2000. Diana has experience in negotiations as part of her CIDA experience and participated as a negotiator on the Canadian delegations to the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995.

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