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WOMEN'S POLICY

JOURNAL OF HARVARD

VOLUME 7, 2009–2010

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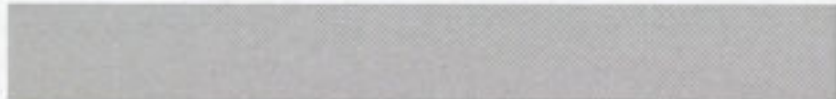
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EDITOR'S REMARKS

Women around the world face a variety of challenges rooted in policies, laws, and social and cultural norms. Many women's stories, voices, and challenges remain unheard or disregarded in today's discussions of women and policy. As the editors of the seventh volume of the *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard, John F. Kennedy School of Government*, our central aim was to bring together pioneering voices whose perspectives and work on women's policy challenges around the world are innovative and unique. This issue provides an array of novel and truly diverse perspectives on national and transnational policies and phenomena that have, one way or another, impacted women's lives.

I am pleased to present this seventh volume of the *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard, John F. Kennedy School of Government*, which reflects a variety of critical topics and views. We begin with a narrative essay by Michelle Bellino that strikingly portrays the tragic fate of the victims of systematic violence against women in Guatemala. In her essay, Bellino addresses domestic and international efforts against "femicide" that have not yet succeeded in putting an end to this brutal crime in Guatemala.

Next, we present three feature essays, beginning with a piece by Ramona Vijayarasa who points out the necessity of shifting the focus of feminist discourse on prostitution and trafficking away from "consent"—a paradigm that leaves migrant women in the sex industry no more protected than before. Next, Zoe Horn argues that women are the most vulnerable members of the informal workforce and calls for immediate intervention by local, national, and international actors positioned to provide assistance. We then conclude our feature essay section with an article by Laura Kavazanjian that explores solutions to the challenges girls in Afghanistan face in accessing primary education.

The journal is also proud to present two interviews with prominent women whose research and work are exceptional and exemplary. Our editorial staff spoke with Clark University Professor Cynthia Enloe, a prominent author and scholar focusing on women's politics in the national and international arenas. During her conversation with one of our senior editors, Enloe shared her perspectives on a wide range of issues revolving around war, militarism, and gender. We were also fortunate to have an opportunity to speak with 2009 Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom about the significance of her Nobel Prize and applications of her scholarship to pressing policy issues.

In the commentary section we present an account of a conversation with the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, on health care and choice. This piece incorporates the transcript of an interview between David

Gergen, director of the Center for Public Leadership at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and Speaker Pelosi at an event at the Kennedy School in November 2009. This piece is followed by a commentary by Nazneen Mehta about the familiar and opposing images of poor women. Mehta argues that the opposing images of Third World poor women as hardworking and powerless victims and poor women in the United States as "welfare queens" have a profound influence on U.S. public policy, creating a sharp contrast between international and domestic policies for assistance to women in poverty.

In the final section of this issue, we are delighted to present a review of Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. In this piece, Masum Momaya argues that while *Half the Sky* might help mobilize resources for women in the Global South, some of the ideological and practical implications embedded in the book could contribute to the very discrimination and exploitation the authors seek to eliminate. We then conclude the volume with Nicholas Kristof's response to the questions the editors drew from Momaya's review about the arguments put forth in *Half the Sky*.

This year we received an exceptionally high volume of remarkable submissions that made the selection process quite challenging. Regrettably, due to our journal's budget restrictions, we were unable to include all of the outstanding pieces that we received. From this misfortune, however, arose the opportunity to innovate. This year we created an online-exclusive section for our journal where we present two additional feature articles. First, Katie Tyrrell analyzes the potential for the Liberian women's peace movement to serve as an impetus for further implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) on women, peace, and security, including UNSCR 1325. In the subsequent article, Laura Sjoberg discusses, and suggests a potential solution to, the failures of the noncombatant immunity principle to protect civilians in war.

The publication of the seventh volume of the *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard, John F. Kennedy School of Government* would not have been possible without the hard work of many individuals. It goes without saying that we had a group of enthusiastic, eager, and hardworking editorial staff members who truly engaged with the material during the selection and editing processes. Specifically, I must acknowledge the contributions of Mattea Kramer, our managing editor, who played a critical role by offering her tremendous enthusiasm to keep all of us motivated and committed to the mission of this journal. We would like to show particular gratitude to our publisher Martha

Foley, who avidly guided and supported us throughout this process. We owe special thanks to the Kennedy School Student Government (KSSG) for generously funding the journal's printing expenses. Finally, we would like to thank Professor Richard Parker, our faculty advisor at the Kennedy School of Government.

We are grateful to all who have supported the work of this journal since the beginning. Lastly, we would like to take this opportunity to ask for the support of all those who, like us, believe that the *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard, John F. Kennedy School of Government* offers an important forum for the innovative exploration of vital women's policy issues across the globe. It is with the support of passionate individuals and institutions that we continue to publish this journal. Only with your support can the *Women's Policy Journal of Harvard, John F. Kennedy School of Government* expand the opportunity for these voices for women's policy concerns to be heard by the world.

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Femicide and Silence in “Postwar” Guatemala

by Michelle Bellino

Michelle Bellino is a second-year doctoral student in the culture, communities, and education concentration at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Her main research interest is history education that follows mass violence, particularly identity-based conflicts. As part of the social memory processes that characterize transitional justice societies, she studies how postwar generations engage with histories of violence and construct their identity through vicarious “post-memories.”

I am in Claudina Isabel’s bedroom, a place I have imagined many times since meeting her father, Jorge. The room looks exactly as it did in his pictures—stuffed animals lined against the window in species and height order, two beds neatly made up in pink with ruffled pillows. But Claudina’s mother tells me they have given away most of her things and don’t bother going into the room anymore. She pulls back one of the pink bedspreads and reveals a blank mattress.

Jorge and Claudina’s daughter, Claudina Isabel, was brutally raped and murdered on 13 August 2005 in Guatemala City. Since then, Jorge is one of a very small group of activists who pursues justice for crimes of “femicide”—the murder of

women—by registering complaints with the public prosecutor and Human Rights Ombudsman offices. Between 2000 and 2008, 4,300 women in Guatemala were murdered (GHRC 2009a). Though femicide does not dominate the annual homicide rate—which exceeded 6,000 in 2008 in a country of only 13 million (González 2009)—crimes against women stand out because they bear systematic marks meant to induce fear and dehumanize women. Among shades of violence that cut across gender, class, and ethnic lines, gendered violence targets women for being women.

Claudina Isabel’s parents speak with measured grief, “She was very pretty, but they took her from us.” Claudina gestures to a framed photo of her daughter. It is the picture that Jorge carries into meetings with the public prosecutor’s office, the picture he uses to launch into his testimony for international human rights-minded audiences, the picture that has publicized Claudina Isabel’s nineteen-year-old face as a national tragedy. Claudina’s murder has been classified as femicide, but not simply because she was a woman. Femicide entails more than just murder; an extreme hate crime, it violently communicates the powerful asymmetry of sexism and misogyny (Russell 2001, 3). In Guatemala, murders of female victims are often committed with systematic brutality meant to shock and provoke terror so that all females feel threatened by such a public display. Sexual abuse is almost always a component, often accompanying signs of torture (Sanford 2008). Notably, the darkest thread tying together these symptoms of gendered violence is that impunity for the perpetrators is nearly guaranteed.

IMPUNITY AND THE SHADES OF VIOLENCE IN “POSTWAR” GUATEMALA

Impunity functions as a form of permission for these crimes; it is the critical element that distinguishes the gendered violence taking place in Guatemala as *feminicide*, rather than *femicide*. Feminicide, unlike femicide, “holds

Present-day Guatemala is plagued by a culture of impunity that penetrates the everyday lives of citizens and communicates the powerlessness of individuals to effect change. Because the official scapegoat for present-day violence is delinquency, encompassing petty violence and gang-related criminal activity (Casey and Cházaro 2005), official explanations

❖ *State complicity in the crime is revealed by investigators’ inability or unwillingness to protect women’s rights and conduct comprehensive investigations to punish violators of those rights.*

responsible not only the male perpetrators but also the state and judicial structures that normalize misogyny” (Sanford 2008, 112). The Office of the Special Prosecutor on Women, devoted exclusively to crimes against female victims, receives nearly 700 reports of sexual violence each month, but less than 2 percent of these complaints result in identification of suspects (GHRC 2009b). And even those arrest warrants it does issue have little effect; nearly half are still pending (GHRC 2009b). Cases that are investigated frequently contend with glaring errors at each stage of investigation, beginning with poor documentation of the crime scene and forensic exam, followed by a failure to detain, interrogate, or prosecute suspects (Sanford 2008; Portenier 2007). Further, assumptions about a victim’s social background often influence the thoroughness of investigation. In Claudina’s case, because she was wearing sandals and a belly button ring, police assumed she was a prostitute, unworthy of investigation (Sanford 2008).

reason that female victims are a side effect of petty crime, are the result of gang retribution (GHRC 2009a), or are victims of gang indoctrination where rape is a prerequisite for membership (Monterroso 2009). Yet whether the perpetrator is a gang member, a police officer, or a boyfriend, state complicity in the crime is revealed by investigators’ inability or unwillingness to protect women’s rights and conduct comprehensive investigations to punish violators of those rights. The lack of political will is further evidenced in the improbability of the case going to trial and the near impossibility that criminals will be brought to justice. Depoliticizing the tragedy denies connections between gendered violence and the deeper social and political structures that have historically underpinned misogyny.

Thirteen years after the signing of the peace accords that brought about an end to Guatemala’s thirty-six-year civil war, rampant violence and a startling 99 percent impunity rate have earned

Guatemala the title “killer’s paradise” (Portenier 2007). The high rate of contemporary violence is theorized as a consequence of the civil war. During the war, thousands of young men were forcibly recruited to fight in state or guerrilla armies, where they were equipped with resources and strategies to commit mass atrocities. Following the peace accords, and in the absence of educational and occupational opportunity, gangs emerged as a form of social networking. Coupled with organized crime, a surplus of weapons, and a proclivity toward violence as a learned mode of expression, these present-day delinquents are a national menace, but they are often used as a convenient scapegoat that oversimplifies the many shades of “postwar” violence. The popular belief is that generations of Guatemalans have been continuously socialized into an inevitable “culture of violence” (Portenier 2007; GHRC 2009a).

Past violence may bleed into the present, but the war’s relationship to contemporary feminicide is not simply a result of cause and effect. Rather, it is the confluence of military strategies for victimization and the politics of the war’s aftermath that have produced the tragedy of feminicide. Women and girls were

violations committed by the state military (CEH 1999). Nor can sexual violence be forgotten as a crucial element of colonial violence that targeted indigenous women as the means of creating a mestizo race.

Another oft-cited cause of feminicide is a broader “culture of machismo” (GHRC 2009a; Monterroso 2009; Portenier 2007). Throughout Guatemala, males hold higher-paying jobs, enjoy a higher literacy rate, and disproportionately hold positions of authority. Women are more likely to be hired on the basis of physical appearance, expected to perform sexual favors for men in authority, and targeted by domestic violence (author interviews 2009; Monterroso 2009). Among Guatemalans who recognize the reality of feminicide, nearly every woman with whom I spoke during personal interviews shared the same theory: that men are killing women to forcefully communicate their distaste for women’s growing independence. After the peace accords, women had increased opportunities to become socially and politically engaged, but feminicide is meant to put women back in their (domestic) place. Though machismo is often theorized as an innate cultural force, gender inequality is historically rooted in official policy. Whether or not machismo is the root

❖ *less than 2 percent of these complaints result in identification of suspects*

targeted during the civil war because women were the reproductive source of guerrilla insurgents (CEH 1999; Portenier 2007). Sexual violence targeting women and children also played a defining role in the conflict, with 99 percent of sexual

cause of feminicide, increased dependency on men is undoubtedly a consequence of the violence. Women are more likely to socialize at home rather than go out—especially at night—and when they do go out, they are more likely to

be accompanied by a male chaperone or bodyguard (author interviews 2007, 2008, 2009).

ASSESSING THE VALUE OF GUATEMALA'S LAW AGAINST FEMICIDE

At the public prosecutor's office, Jorge and I sign in with the secretary and wait. Jorge tears through newspapers, looking for an editorial he wrote about the need for the state to take a stand against femicide. I glance sideways at the newspaper's front page—a woman's topless body lies face down on a street somewhere in Guatemala City, blood staining her skirt, police banners closing the scene, and officers filling out paperwork over her with untroubled faces. In large print, a title caption reads "Delincuencia" (delinquency). Jorge speaks pointedly, "One Guatemalan man killed a woman and realized that no one cared, no one noticed, no one punished him. And others saw you could get away with murder. Now look at the tragedy this country is living." We wait in the lobby

directed not only at the grim prospect of justice for his daughter, but also toward a disempowered Guatemalan society. Uncoiling the hose, Jorge begins watering endless rows of plants. Each leaf receives Jorge's full attention, as if one petal worn thin is another death too big to bear.

In April 2008, Guatemalan Congress approved Decree 22-2008, the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women, establishing punishment sentences for a range of crimes against women. Fittingly, the law recognizes that gender inequality and misogyny underpin femicide, encompassing physical, psychological, and economic violence toward women (Blas and Osorio 2008). The passing of this law has been recognized as a national victory for women's rights, but the impact of this policy change for the everyday lives of Guatemalans is largely negligible. For Jorge's daughter, the law comes too late, and because Claudina Isabel's murderers have never been identified, it may not have helped anyway. The effectiveness of the Law Against Femicide is contingent

❖❖❖ *In Claudina's case, because she was wearing sandals and a belly button ring, police assumed she was a prostitute, unworthy of investigation.*

until our appointment with the public prosecutor is canceled—twenty minutes past its scheduled time. After returning home, Jorge and I sit in the backyard garden, quiet. "They just passed the new Law Against Femicide," I say to Jorge, hopeful that this law will provide a new opening in his daughter's case, or at least a wider national consciousness of gendered violence. But he says it won't make a difference. His skepticism is

upon identifying, interrogating, and prosecuting criminals responsible for committing these crimes. Despite the law's recognition that femicide is a national liability, the law is inadequate without an effective and deliberate police force and justice system. It also assumes that women have equal access to justice, though systems of corruption, discrimination, and poverty limit the level of

engagement that a woman—and, indeed, any individual—can have with state institutions (GHRC 2009c). Ignoring these barriers, the state has been able to publicly address the issue without legally resolving it. Not surprisingly, the law has had little impact since its inception. Between January and October 2009, Guatemala experienced a 6 percent increase in overall homicides, but a 10 percent increase in murders of female victims, as compared to the same ten months in 2008.

When Jorge expresses his skepticism that the Law Against Femicide will make a difference to him or to any female victim of violence, he is articulating his distrust of the national justice system. Efficacious policy changes will need to be multisited and multidirectional to restore that trust. And because access to rights is contingent upon awareness of rights, there is an added imperative for education to explicitly address human rights. Formal education is the critical, national site where the state’s accountability for protecting human rights is communicated—and where young people can develop into informed citizens who engage with social and political issues. To date, international awareness campaigns protesting femicide in Guatemala—including by Amnesty International, the Center for Gender & Refugee Studies, and the Guatemala Human Rights Commission—have been insufficient to achieve this goal. The gendered violence that grips Guatemala today is still, for too many, a silent tragedy.

On the fourth anniversary of Claudina Isabel’s death, her mother visits her grave and leaves sunflowers, crying as the petals fall into the edges of Claudina’s carved name. Jorge meanwhile continues his own struggle: to engrave his daughter’s name in the consciousness of Guatemalan state officials and the international community through his laborious pursuit of justice. He says, “Some coward shot Claudina Isabel’s face from forty-five centimeters away. She didn’t have the opportunity to live, and thank God, because if she had, the indifference of our country is so great that if she had only been wounded, she would have bled to death.” In his continued meetings at the public prosecutor’s office, he looks into the distant eyes of the investigator, “We can end this tragedy. We just need a response from you.”

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Exploitation or Expectations: Moving Beyond Consent

by Ramona Vijayarasa

Ramona Vijayarasa is a doctoral candidate in the School of Social Sciences and International Studies at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. She is undertaking a comparative study of the underlying causes and patterns of trafficking in women and girls for labor and sexual exploitation. A human rights lawyer, she has worked with the International Organization for Migration in both Vietnam and Ukraine and at the Center for Reproductive Rights and the International Center for Transitional Justice, both in New York. She earned her L.L.M. degree in international legal studies from New York University School of Law and received a bachelor of arts (political science and history) and bachelor of laws from the University of New South Wales, following which she practiced commercial law.

ABSTRACT:

The issue of consent in prostitution has plagued feminist critical thinking for decades, with debates dividing abolitionists on the one side and pro-sex-worker advocates on the other. These debates reached a peak at the 2000 negotiations concerning the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (hereafter, UN

Protocol). In this article, I argue that one decade later, it is time to move the focus in feminist discourse on prostitution and trafficking away from consent. Debating what does and does not constitute “consent” serves only to leave migrant women in the sex industry in destination countries—whether “coerced” or “voluntary”—no more protected than before the UN Protocol came into force. Using hypothetical examples, my aim is to foster a renewed search for common ground on how we frame prostitution, trafficking, and undocumented migration. I suggest there are mutual interests between opposing feminist perspectives in discussing the “unmet expectations” of all exploited undocumented migrants, allowing both groups of feminists to unite to advocate for the rights of even “willing victims” who face exploitation and abuse under conditions contrary to their expectations prior to embarking on a search for better opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

The question of consent has long been central to feminist critical thinking about prostitution and trafficking. In this article, my aim is to address questions that have divided prostitution abolitionists¹ and pro-sex-worker advocates and foster a renewed search for common ground on how we approach prostitution, trafficking, and undocumented migration. It is now a decade after the negotiations for the drafting of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (United Nations 2004), signed by more than eighty countries in Palermo, Italy, in December 2000 (hereafter, UN Protocol). It is time for a reconsideration of feminist discourse in this

area. In a 2005 assessment of the UN Protocol's negotiations, pro-sex-worker feminist Jo Doezema recognized the difficulty of displacing "consent" and moving beyond the trafficking framework (Doezema 2005, 81). In this brief analysis, I begin that task.

I contend that the arguments proposed by both groups of feminists, to varying degrees, have alienated key stakeholders (particularly for abolitionists, the sex workers themselves). Furthermore, they have served to dismiss any notion of voluntariness exercised by migrant women in decision making that leads to trafficking. At other times, these arguments have encouraged an overinclusive application of the term "trafficking" while the experiences of the non-trafficked, exploited, smuggled migrants have been pushed largely off the radar. Efforts at debating consent could otherwise be aimed at joint advocacy on the rights of migrant women and the responsibility of governments in both source and destination countries to protect the rights of those individuals whose vulnerability is heightened by the very fact of being undocumented. In fact, the arduous journeys, low wages, hazardous working environments, and unsanitary living conditions often faced by other undocumented migrants are no different from those of the trafficked victim (Illes et al. 2008, 205-206). Despite experiencing "trafficking-like work conditions," governments are able to deny protection and assistance to "willing victims" (Kojima 2007, 151). Meanwhile, sensationalized imagery of trafficking has flourished in academic and nonacademic circles and has been used to further the prostitution debates, by writers on both sides, with less attention given to the betrayed hopes of the individuals than to the furthering of feminist arguments.

In this article, I argue that by moving away from the divisive terrain of "consent," abolitionists and pro-sex-worker feminists can unite in drawing attention to the "unmet expectations" of all undocumented migrants. In the first section, I sketch an overview of key literature on the issue of consent in prostitution. In the second section, I explore two typical cases of the undocumented migrant, examples that differ from the more sensationalized stories often presented in academic and popular literature. In the context of these case studies, I discuss questions of consent, voluntariness, and exploitation and refer to feminist debates on whether decision making should be seen as the free choice of individual agents or shaped by structural inequalities. I subsequently consider the "common ground" between the two camps of feminist thought and the extent to which a move toward an emphasis on unmet expectations compromises the stance of either group. To conclude, I suggest that there are mutual interests in discussing the unmet expectations of victims of trafficking and exploited undocumented migrants, where experiences do not live up to what was anticipated when entering initial agreements. I contend that a focus on unmet expectations provides a more fruitful starting point for debate and advocacy. By examining unmet expectations, we are able to incorporate abolitionist feminists' critiques of the exploitative conditions that form part of their major objection to the prostitution industry, including violence and forced or unsafe sex. Simultaneously, an assessment of unmet expectations, from the perspective of working conditions, accords with the labor-rights approach of pro-sex-worker advocates.

CONSENT, THE EXPLOITED PROSTITUTE, AND THE VOLUNTARY SEX WORKER

Two schools of thought address the question of consent in prostitution. Feminists campaigning for the abolition of prostitution argue that prostitution is a form of exploitation of women. Those who advocate for this perspective believe that, with the exception of the prostitutes themselves, all actors involved in the trade should be subject to some form of criminal, and perhaps civil, sanctions (Farley 2004; Gallagher 2001; Raymond 2004; Jeffreys 1997; Balos 2004). Instead, as Melissa Farley notes, currently the “johns” are typically left legally and socially protected and unaccountable, regardless of the status of prostitution in society (Farley 2004, 1092). Abolitionists contend that the physical, social, and psychological harms of prostitution cannot be controlled in a way that enhances the autonomy or safety of women (Farley 2004, 1087; Balos 2004, 138-139). Therefore, from this perspective, in light of the documented harms involved in prostitution, it is contradictory to oppose trafficking while promoting prostitution as a justifiable form of labor (Farley 2004, 1094-1109). This view believes exploitation should be actionable whether it is against women or children. As Janice Raymond argues, “A girl’s violation doesn’t magically become a choice on the day she turns 18” (Miles 2003, 26; Jeffreys 2000). Arguments that frame prostitution as a form of work are deemed as “attempts to remove all obstacles to conducting the business of prostitution” (Farley 2004, 1091).

In contrast, those in the pro-sex-work camp, represented at the UN Protocol’s negotiations as the Human Rights Caucus, consider themselves activists

for the rights of sex workers. Legalization of sex work is the main objective, expected to lead to better working conditions and protections for sex workers (Davidson 2003; Kempadoo and Doezema 1998). In this view, sex work is distinguishable from trafficking; sex work is a form of labor based on women’s use of their bodies to earn an income, as opposed to trafficking, which involves exploitation and coercion or deceit about the nature of the work or working conditions (Segrave and Milivojevic 2005, 11). Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (1998) argue that criminalization of sex trafficking exacerbates the violence suffered by migrant women at the hands of recruiters, smugglers, employers, clients, and immigration officials. In this respect, the Associação Brasileira de Defesa da Mulher, da Infância e da Juventude (ASBRAD) refers to the triple stigma—“criminosa, puta, e imigrante” (criminal, bitch, and immigrant)—that promotes inhumane treatment (ASBRAD 2008, 261). According to Laura Agustín, women migrants are often aware of the sexual nature of the work and, like other migrant workers, have some capacity to resist the economic, social, and physical forms of compulsion they face. Agustín argues, “Their status as ‘illegal’ migrants, without permission to work in Europe, is, for them, the single overarching problem to solve, and their irregular status, not sex, is the heart of the issue” (Agustín 2005, 98).

This divide between feminist theorists has gone hand in hand with the structure-agency debate, pitting abolitionists who highlight the social, economic, and political structures that constrain women’s employment choices against pro-sex-worker feminists who see sex work as a choice and an example of

women exercising individual agency (Abrams 1999; Barry 1995). Pro-sex-work feminists deem sex workers to be autonomous agents. They believe women's engagement in, and experience of, sex work is in direct contrast to widespread characterizations of "passivity, ignorance and force" (Agustín 2005, 98).

Abolitionists, on the other hand, dismiss the notion of free choice; they believe women are not free agents, operating on a level playing field upon which they rationally choose prostitution over other occupations for the advantages it offers (Barry 1995). They believe economic coercion renders hollow the idea of free choice (Jeffreys 2000, 368-369), with underlying socioeconomic inequality driving the decision making that leads women into the sex industry.

Abolitionists' advancement of domestic laws criminalizing the sex industry has, as a consequence, isolated sex workers. In this respect, advocacy by pro-sex-work feminists for the rights of sex workers and for legalized prostitution has been directed as much at governments, authorities, and violent clients as at abolitionists (who are frequently described in this context as "Western" feminists) and the "rescue industry" (Sutherland 2004, 164; Trépanier 2003, 50; Busza 2004, 243). At the same time, pro-sex-work feminists distinguish between "voluntary" migration for sex work and trafficking for forced sexual exploitation, a distinction that overestimates the voluntariness of the sex worker and downplays the socioeconomic vulnerability that influences decision making. This tactic adopted by pro-sex-work feminists has fostered the very stereotype of trafficked women chained to beds that they themselves deride. By highlighting the "voluntariness" of

prostitution and the "involuntariness" of trafficking, pro-sex-worker feminists have hindered global recognition of the initial voluntariness involved in many situations that end in trafficking (Banerjee 2006, 7). A decade after the 2000 negotiations of the UN Protocol, little headway has been made on resolving these questions of choice and consent.

THE UN PROTOCOL AND THE CASE OF THE UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANT

I now discuss the compromise definition of trafficking presented in the UN Protocol, one of the most recent international instruments on the issue. I consider how the UN Protocol and its definition of trafficking frame issues such as voluntariness, exploitation, and consent. I then present two hypothetical cases of undocumented migrant women and assess how both sides of the feminist divide typically understand such cases.

Both feminist camps considered negotiations regarding the definition of trafficking as critical in determining whether all forms of prostitution were to be considered violence and inextricably linked to trafficking (Doezema 2005, 72; Jeffreys 2002, 45). The UN Protocol defines trafficking as:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual

exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (United Nations 2004, Article 3(a))

The definition renders consent irrelevant if any of the above listed means are used as explained below:

The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used. (United Nations 2004, Article 3(b))

This definition leads to the very obvious question of what if *none* of the means listed are used to recruit, transport, transfer, harbor, or receive an individual for the purpose of exploitation? Can one consent to exploitation? The UN Protocol in fact suggests that one can, and this “privileging of consent” in the definition has been critiqued by abolitionist Beverley Balos (2004). The phrase “abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability” adds a further complication. The *travaux préparatoires* to the UN Protocol explicitly state:

The reference to abuse of a position of vulnerability is understood to refer to any situation in which the person involved has no real or acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved. (UNODC 2006, 347)

For abolitionists, entry into prostitution arises from socioeconomic exclusion, which leaves women (in this case) with no real alternative other than to sell their bodies through a system of exploitation. Meanwhile, for proponents of the “agency” argument, sex work for the migrant sex worker is a choice that can

offer more income and freedom than the alternatives at home (Busza 2004, 240-241). This leaves open the question of what is a “real and acceptable alternative” and leads back to the question of what constitutes consent and how much voluntariness is exercised by the undocumented migrant in her entry into sex work.

The greater the apparent voluntariness, the easier it is to accept that the situation is a case of smuggling rather than trafficking. A valuable point made by Doezema is that the UN Protocol “reproduces the whore/Madonna division” such that only involuntariness is rewarded with protection (Doezema 1998, 47). For this reason, sex worker advocates deride the very idea of an anti-trafficking framework (Doezema 2005, 76). In my view, the focus of the UN Protocol’s definition on the movement of people through threats, force, coercion, fraud, or deception has heightened the divide between feminists. The definition deflects attention away from what is often a blurred and false distinction between trafficking and other forms of irregular migration, heightened by the fact that smuggling is defined in a separate instrument.² It clouds situations where a potential migrant might voluntarily use the services of a smuggler and later find herself in a situation of exploitation, with her initial consent now put into question. My hypothetical of Tatiana is an example in point here:

Tatiana will pay smuggler “A” U.S. \$5,000 to take her over the border from Ukraine to Italy. Before leaving Ukraine, she pays U.S. \$2,000 to A as a deposit for his help. Having arrived in Rome, she plans to work for A, in A’s factory, for U.S. \$1,000 per month and has agreed that for the first three

months of work, she will receive no pay to enable her to finish paying off her debt to A. During that time, she has agreed to work sixteen hours a day for six days per week. On her day off, she has agreed that, from time to time, she will work extra hours and will be paid by A U.S. \$2 per hour, which she is allowed to keep to buy food and clothes. She has also agreed with A that he will allow her to sleep on the factory floor so that she does not need to pay for accommodations in Rome and thus avoids bringing her undocumented status to the attention of police or others in the public. For a period of three months, Tatiana receives no money from A and works seven days a week, usually working ten hours on her "day off," which provides her around U.S. \$20 to buy food. She washes herself in the toilet at the factory, as she had agreed with A.

Tatiana is clearly suffering exploitative labor conditions, but what is less clear is whether she is a victim of trafficking. According to the UN Protocol's definition, she was recruited for exploitation. However, her consent is relevant as no means of force, coercion, fraud, or deception have been used, and her expectations of the work and working conditions have been met in every respect. While many activists would want to classify Tatiana's case as one of trafficking, she is, by definition, an exploited, undocumented, smuggled migrant.³ Tatiana is denied the right to rest or to adequate standards of food and shelter. She works outside of the protections of domestic law, with no access to the national health care system or legal protections for her right to decent work. Her ability to stay in Italy remains in the hands of A, who is in a position to deny

her any pay and threaten her with deportation if she attempts to complain to the relevant authorities. I argue that despite Tatiana's awareness of the nature and conditions of her work in Rome, both groups of feminists would almost certainly be sympathetic to this case of labor exploitation. I believe that this example would not raise the same divisions as witnessed in the context of sex work and prostitution discourse. This is demonstrated by the hypothetical case of another woman, Hang:

Hang will pay smuggler "A" U.S. \$5,000 to take her over the border from Vietnam to Cambodia. Before leaving Vietnam, she pays U.S. \$2,000 to A as a deposit for his help. Having arrived in Phnom Penh, she plans to work for A, in A's brothel, for U.S. \$1,000 per month and has agreed that for the first three months of work, she will receive no pay to enable her to finish paying off her debt to A. During that time, she has agreed to deliver services to six to eight clients per day, six days per week. On her day off, she has agreed that, from time to time, she will serve extra clients and will be paid directly by those clients. She is allowed to keep this money to buy food, clothes, and condoms. She sleeps in the brothel at nighttime so that she does not need any money to pay for her own accommodations in Phnom Penh and thus avoids bringing her undocumented status to the attention of police or others in the public. For a period of three months, Hang receives no money from A and works seven days a week, usually serving ten to twelve clients on her "day off," which provides her around U.S. \$200 to buy food, clothes, and save some money. She washes

herself in the toilet at the brothel, as she had agreed with A.

Is Hang's case any different from that of Tatiana's? This is again a situation of exploitation of an undocumented migrant by virtue of her working conditions. Hang is denied the right to rest and to adequate standards of food and shelter. She works outside of the protections of domestic law, in a country where the sex industry was first criminalized in 1996 and brothels are frequently raided by police.

My example of Hang moves away from the paradigmatic image of the young, naïve and innocent girl lured by evil traffickers, which is so often criticized by pro-sex-worker feminists (Doezema 2002). The pro-sex-worker position is that Hang is an "agent" who consented to work in the sex industry. Hang is in a position to earn money in Cambodia and was aware that she would be working in the sex industry before leaving Vietnam, as is said to frequently be the case with undocumented migrant sex workers (Busza 2004, 244).⁴ Indeed, my description of Hang's status as an undocumented, smuggled migrant and not as a victim of trafficking is likely to satisfy the general objection that most pro-sex-worker feminists have regarding excessive application of the term "trafficking" (Doezema 2005, 80). Yet, the pro-sex-worker discourse denies us the ability to label this as a case of exploitation due to the persistent focus on the need to defend the sexual freedoms and agency of women to sell their bodies, even if under conditions that are clearly exploitative in other circumstances.

For abolitionists, Hang is exploited by virtue of the fact that she has been drawn into the sex industry. Her case is one of

exploitation and, for some feminists, violence. As the negotiations for the UN Protocol illustrated, abolitionist feminists classify such a case as trafficking for sexual exploitation. Indeed, the ambiguity surrounding the terms "of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability" in the UN Protocol's definition lends weight to this argument. In this instance, however, I would suggest that debate has been hindered by the typical classification of such a case as one of "trafficking" as opposed to "exploitation of an undocumented migrant." In this instance, Hang has consented to her own exploitation, and she is not a victim of trafficking.

ANALYZING THE COMMON GROUND: EXPLOITATION AND EXPECTATIONS

Both abolitionists and activists for the rights of sex workers are in agreement that consent should never be a factor in determining whether victims of abuse deserve assistance (Chapkis 2003, 929). In this section, I ask what factors *should* be determinants in deciding who is a victim of exploitation and search for a compromise between the two camps in an attempt to move debate and advocacy forward.

I suggest that it is not difficult to find common ground when we consider in further detail the cases discussed above. Tatiana is an undocumented labor migrant and a victim of exploitative working conditions. Hang is an undocumented migrant sex worker. Hang's status as a victim of exploitation, however, remains in doubt. In my view, this is where the challenge lies in finding common ground. To the abolitionist, Hang has been sexually exploited by virtue of her entry into the sex industry, which is inherently a form of violence and exploitation. For the pro-sex-work

feminist, she is an agent of her own destiny. It is here that I introduce the hypothetical case of a third migrant woman in order to shift the focus in the trafficking discourse away from “exploitation” to “unmet expectations.”

Phuong, like Hang, enters the Cambodian sex industry to work for A. Phuong would clearly be a victim of sexual exploitation if she were occasionally beaten by A for failing to attract enough clients every day, or if she were forced to have sex without a condom. Similarly, if Phuong arrived in Cambodia, and was told that her debt was not the remaining U.S. \$3,000 but rather U.S. \$30,000, neither group of feminists would appear comfortable in characterizing the situation as anything other than exploitative. The deep divisions disappear as we have crossed over into the territory of “trafficking.” Phuong is a victim of trafficking, having been recruited by means of deception or fraud or abuse of power for the purpose of exploitation, given her acceptance of different terms when she first left Vietnam with A’s assistance.

From an abolitionist perspective, this new debt imposed on Phuong is typical of the sex industry and of the vulnerability involved in the selling of sex in an industry reliant on economic coercion and economic exploitation. In contrast, for pro-sex-work feminists, sex work is not based on economic coercion and is not inherently economically exploitative, but can be economically liberating for women. From the prism of the pro-sex-worker feminist, then, why is Phuong a victim of trafficking? It is not because she entered an “exploitative” sex industry, but rather because her expectations regarding her working conditions at the outset of her agreement with A did not come to fruition. I suggest that the UN Protocol’s

inclusion of such concepts as “fraud” and “deception” permit such a contractual approach to the issue of trafficking.

One of the strongest criticisms of pro-sex-work feminists regarding the concept of “trafficking” is the tendency to assume that a non-innocent sex worker is left to get what she deserves. The notion of “unmet expectations” allows a pro-sex-worker feminist to campaign against breach of contract for victims of trafficking and migrant sex workers alike. So what is lost for abolitionists if they agree to reframe discourse as an issue of unmet expectations rather than of exploitation? Phuong was expecting a violence-free environment but suffered instances of violence and forced sex by brothel owner, A, and her clients. To draw attention to the failure of expectations of a violence-free environment is not a great leap from the branding by abolitionists of the sex industry as inherently violent or a form of violence against women.

Abolitionists may see my proposed compromise that looks at conditions of “work” and contractual negotiations as giving recognition to prostitution as a form of work (Jeffreys 1997). Phuong was expecting to be paid and was economically exploited. However, to argue that her economic expectations were not met should not be seen by abolitionists as a sacrifice to decades of advocacy against the commodification of women. It certainly does not shed positive light on the sex industry in any way. The commodification of women’s bodies, under conditions considered by abolitionists to be deeply unequal, is fraught with economic exploitation. For abolitionists who identify the socioeconomic inequality and economic coercion that leads to entry into sex work (Jeffreys 2000, 368-369), Phuong’s economic

exploitation should not be left unaddressed. Moreover, if we are not reluctant to argue that Tatiana's expectations as an undocumented labor migrant are unmet if she is later placed under a situation of debt bondage, surely a similar approach can be adopted to Phuong's debt bondage in the sex industry.

In drawing out the implications of the three cases of Tatiana, Hang, and Phuong, I believe we can progress beyond previously stalled debates. The case of Tatiana, in my view, is the easiest to address. Outside of the realm of prostitution, it is a case almost entirely excluded from the feminist debates in this area. The exploitation of labor migrants, outside of the arena of prostitution or sex work, is a field in which we can find common ground between both abolitionists and pro-sex-work feminists. It is a case that does not directly involve the body, sexual imagery, sexual stereotyping, sexual abuse, or sexual stigma. Recognizing the rights to freedom from exploitation of migrant women sits comfortably within the position of both groups.

In the case of Phuong, which sits squarely within the definition of trafficking, again we have accord. From an abolitionist perspective, *Phuong* is a victim of trafficking, by virtue of her recruitment into the sex industry and the abuse of her socioeconomic vulnerability, which leaves her few choices but to migrate for sex work. However, moving beyond old debates, for both abolitionists and pro-sex-work feminists, Phuong is a victim of trafficking, by virtue of her initial contract having contained a misrepresentation that she would face a violence-free environment, and her consent thus having been falsely obtained. She expected to be paid for her work (albeit for what abolitionists see as

inherently violent and degrading work), and these expectations were not met when A economically exploited her. Again, we have common ground.

The case of Hang is the most challenging, as its implications exemplify the divide that has plagued feminist discourse for decades. We continue to have disagreement as to whether her situation is one of exploitation. However, from an advocacy point of view, I suggest that both abolitionists and pro-sex-worker feminists alike need to fight for the rights of Hang to prevent her from becoming Phuong. The way both groups interpret and address Hang's potential vulnerability, however, will unfortunately take different tracks based on the current divide—whether it be abolitionists attacking the lack of alternative opportunities for work for Hang in Vietnam or her lower status in society as a woman that led her to prostitution or pro-sex advocates attacking the lack of labor rights and legal protections for Hang as an undocumented migrant worker operating in an illegal industry.

Trafficking is frequently framed as the result of involuntary movement. A major contributing factor are the terms "recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons" in the UN Protocol's definition, as if a third party—the trafficker—is the only active individual. At the same time, the UN Protocol's inclusion of such concepts as "fraud" and "deception" permits that a contractual approach to the issue of trafficking could be adopted, that we can look at the individual's expectations and the ways in which they have not been met. In this sense, we must recognize that voluntariness is inherent in many situations of trafficking. In the same way that one might enter into a contract to

buy a house, or, to better parallel the nature of entry into a situation of trafficking, enter into a labor contract to provide services as a waitress or construction worker, the contract becomes void if the conditions of work are misrepresented or if the potential employee was deceived as to the nature of the object of the contract. The entry into the agreement was entirely voluntary, but this element does not make the individual any less a victim of fraud or deception, or any less entitled to compensation, when the reality falls evidently far from expectations. I believe that this is the direction that the prostitution and trafficking discourse should take.⁵

CONCLUSION

Feminists have been deeply divided for decades regarding questions of prostitution and trafficking (Frances 1996). Particularly since the drafting of the 2000 UN Protocol, these divisions have formed around the issue of consent—what constitutes consent and whether a woman can actually consent to being a prostitute/sex worker. I argue that to focus on unmet expectations offers a different and more fruitful approach. Using hypothetical examples, we are able to find consensus around unmet expectations, such as no pay contrary to a promised “contract,” longer hours, more clients than agreed, lack of protections from brothel owners when faced with violence at the hands of clients, and forced or unprotected sex. The notion of unmet expectations responds to abolitionist feminists’ interests in critiquing the exploitation involved in the commodification of women and the exploitative conditions that form part, although not all, of the major challenges offered by abolitionists to the prostitution industry. In contrast, pro-sex-work feminists are likely to be in

accord with a focus on unmet expectations, being in line with decades of labor-rights advocacy for sex workers, along with the recognition of rights’ protections for undocumented migrant women who are not, by definition, victims of trafficking. By focusing on what women agree to do and when these conditions change against their will, we give adequate weight to the voluntariness exercised by exploited migrant women. Moreover, formerly divided feminists can unite to advocate for the rights of these “willing victims” who face exploitation and abuse under conditions contrary to their expectations prior to embarking on a search for better opportunities.

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ENDNOTES

¹ In this article, I use the terms "prostitute" and "sex worker" interchangeably in line with the approach adopted in the various feminist discourses. I realize that there is no truly "neutral" language in this area, with the terms adopted by individual writers revealing the opinion they hold toward the buying and selling of sex.

² The UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Air and Sea, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime provides: "Smuggling of migrants' shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident" (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. n.d., Article 3(a)).

³ My own work with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Vietnam and Ukraine and interviews conducted for my doctoral thesis on trafficking lead me to believe that many stakeholders working in the field of trafficking, in international organizations, local and international nongovernmental organizations, and at the donor level, would define Tatiana's case as an example of trafficking.

⁴ See also Agustín 2005, 101-102, regarding migrant sex workers in Europe.

⁵ I am developing the implications of this contractual approach to trafficking further in my thesis. Any comments from readers would be welcome at rvijeyarasa@gmail.com.

No Cushion to Fall Back On: Global Recession and Informally Employed Women in the Global South

by Zoë Horn

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ABSTRACT

Employment in the informal economy tends to rise during economic crises, but informal workers are not necessarily thriving. The informal economy may provide some initial relief from the shocks of the crisis, but this informal "cushion" is illusory. Drawing on data from interviews and focus groups with informal workers in Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa, this article suggests that the crisis is driving many informal workers and their families further into impoverishment. Lacking social and economic protections, infor-

mal workers have no cushion of their own to fall back on. Women, the most vulnerable members of the informal workforce, are particularly hard hit. This article calls for immediate intervention by local, national, and international actors positioned to provide assistance.

INTRODUCTION

"Women are bearing the brunt of this recession. Many of the women, especially those who are widowed or single mothers, have no external support. They are caring for children alone, with dwindling incomes. Now many must support relatives who come to them after losing their jobs. Some married women tell us their husbands have given up but these women cannot give up, for the sake of their children."

— Evalyne Wanyama, national coordinator, Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders (KENASVIT)¹

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports that, due to unprecedented policy actions, the risks to the global financial system have finally subsided (International Monetary Fund 2009a). Meanwhile, a recent return to positive growth in many wealthy countries has some asserting that global economic recovery is nigh. Unfortunately, this optimism may be premature for many in the global workforce, particularly those in the Global South, for whom the worst may still lie ahead. Throughout the crisis, fears have persisted that the downturn may endure longer and penetrate deeper in developing countries, with the crisis threatening economic progress of recent years. The International Labour Organization estimates that informal employment comprises more than half of all employment in Latin America and

more than 70 percent in sub-Saharan and makes up 65 percent of nonagricultural employment in Asia, although some estimates have put the number closer to 80 percent. Additionally, the contribution of the informal economy to gross domestic product (GDP) is around 30 percent for Asia and Latin America and more than 40 percent for sub-Saharan Africa (International Labour Organization 2002). Yet, to date, international attention remains squarely focused on monitoring economic indicators that mostly fail to capture the real-world impacts of the crisis on the majority of the developing world's labor force—those employed in the informal economy.²

The size and significance of the informal economy in the Global South makes its exclusion from many high-profile reports problematic, posing a serious challenge to our grasp of the impact of the recession on the real economies of developing countries. The scarcity of research and information is particularly significant in light of evidence from past crises that suggests the ranks of the informally employed swell during economic downturns, as many retrenched workers and formal wage earners engage in informal activities to compensate for declining wages and purchasing power. This source of income is particularly critical in the absence of formal social protection. The impacts of the economic crisis on the informal economy are also crucial to understanding the effects of the crisis on the livelihoods of the world's working women. This is because women have a disproportionately high rate of participation in the informal economy and generally comprise its poorest ranks, making informally employed women among the most vulnerable members of the global workforce.

This article draws on findings from an ongoing global study that attempts to address this knowledge gap by assessing the impact of the economic crisis on nonagricultural informal workers across three regions—Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa—and within four informal nonagricultural occupational sectors—construction work, home-based work, street vending, and waste picking. Specifically, the article will use available findings to interrogate two myths that have persisted about the current economic crisis. The first is the notion that the informal economy serves as a “cushion” for its formal counterpart during economic downturns. The second is the popular perception that the current crisis is taking the overall form of a “he-cession” (Salam 2009), disproportionately ravaging men and male-dominated formal sectors such as banking and manufacturing while leaving women relatively sheltered from the impacts.

While employment in the informal economy may rise during economic crises (Lee 1998; Tokman 1992), this does not necessarily mean that traditional informal workers or new entrants are thriving. Study findings elaborate on the specific transmission channels of the crisis to the selected informal sectors, as well as the additional strain caused by deteriorating working conditions and increased competition from new entrants in the informal economy. These impacts are often most severe for informally employed women, whose paid and unpaid work burden is often compounded by economic downturn. The gender-specific impacts of the crisis are discussed in terms of the structure and composition of the informal sector, but also as a function of the household and

individual-level impacts of the crisis, related to shifting responsibility in paid and unpaid work within families.

While the informal economy may have provided some initial relief from the shocks of the crisis, this informal safety net is illusory, and the more pressing issue is the reality that informal workers, lacking social and economic protections by definition, have no cushion of their own to fall back on. Women are particularly exposed during this crisis, and many informal workers and their families have been driven further into impoverishment. Resolving this situation demands immediate and thoughtful intervention by local, national, and international actors positioned to provide assistance, a topic this article turns to in its conclusion.

RESEARCH SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

This article is based on findings from an ongoing, global study conducted by the Inclusive Cities project and coordinated by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) to address the gap in information about the impact of the crisis on informal workers in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Horn 2009).

Study research was conducted between July and September 2009 by local and regional partners—member-based organizations of informal workers as well as several technical support organizations that work directly with the working poor. Data was gathered through focus group discussions, one-on-one interviews with workers, and key informant interviews with staff from member-based organizations and organizers of informal workers. This article includes data from sixteen focus groups whose participants were each individually interviewed. In total,

219 informal workers were interviewed from four occupational sectors. This included 12 construction workers, 102 home-based workers, 52 street vendors, and 53 waste pickers. In all sectors, the majority of participants were women, who represented 82 percent of the total number of interviewees.

Table 1 depicts the study's partners, the sector of their work, and the locale where they conducted their research.

DIMINISHING LIVELIHOODS: SMALLER AND SMALLER SLIVERS OF A SHRINKING INFORMAL PIE

The effects of the economic downturn on urban informal sectors in the Global South are occurring both in parallel with and as a consequence of the effects of the crisis in the formal economy. Employment in the informal economy includes all remunerative work—both self-employment and wage employment—that is not recognized, regulated, or protected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks as well as nonremunerative work undertaken in an income-producing enterprise (International Labour Organization 2002). In global value chains, production, distribution, and employment can fall at different points on a continuum between pure “formal” relations (i.e., regulated and protected) at one pole and pure “informal” relations (i.e., unregulated and unprotected) at the other, with many intermediate categories in between. Workers can also move across the formal-informal continuum, operate simultaneously at different points along it, or both (Chen 2007).

It is not surprising then, that informal sectors are being hit by many of the same forces affecting the formal economy, such as shrinking consumption, dropping

Table 1. Study Participation by Sector and Locale

Sector	Partner	Country/City
Construction work	Self-Employed Workers Association	Ahmedabad, India
Home-based work	Homenet South-East Asia (Homenet Thailand and Homenet Indonesia)	Hat Yai and Bangkok, Thailand; Malang, Indonesia
	Homenet South Asia (Homenet Pakistan)	Kasur and Sialkot, Pakistan
Street vending	StreetNet International affiliates: MUFIS KENSAVIT FEDEVAL Asiye eTafuleni	Blantyre, Malawi Nakuru, Kenya Lima, Peru Durban, South Africa
Waste picking	Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) AVINA	Pune, India Bogotá, Colombia; Santiago, Chile

Table 2. Home-Based Work Activity, Employment Structure, and Market for Products

Country	Employment Structure/ Product	Export Market	Domestic Market	Local Market
Indonesia	Subcontracted Badminton rackets/ shuttlecocks Shoes	✓	✓ ✓	✓
Thailand	Subcontracted Car accessories Garment Leather work	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓
	Self-employed Food processing Garment			✓ ✓
Pakistan	Subcontracted Soccer balls	✓	✓	✓
	Self-employed Reed mats	✓	✓	✓

demand, and price instability. In addition, although informal markets have some inherent flexibility, their resilience is now being tested to the limit. Retrenched and underemployed workers are turning to the informal economy. Findings suggest that more and more informal workers are competing for fewer customers and for fewer and smaller contracts. This reality is particularly grim given that unemployment in the formal sector is expected to continue to grow. Already, the International Labour Organization estimates that an additional 34 million people have become unemployed between 2007 and 2009, with most of these increases occurring in 2009 (International Labour Organization 2010).

Home-Based Workers

During the past few decades, much of the informalization and feminization of the labor forces in developing countries (Charmes 2001) has been related to the growth of home-based work. In most countries, official statistics on home-based work are extremely limited, and there are few national or global figures on the exact gender composition of this work. However, available estimates suggest that this work is a disproportionately critical source of income for women,³ who account for 50 percent to 75 percent of home-based workers where statistics are available (International Labour Organization 2002). This is particularly true in Asia, in part because of the regional growth in manufacturing. Home-based workers include the self-employed who are engaged in family businesses or own-account operations (working by themselves) as well as paid workers working under subcontracting arrangements, both of whom are included in the findings of this article. Specific production activities for home-based

workers interviewed for this report in Indonesia, Pakistan, and Thailand are included in Table 2.

Decreased demand within critical global and regional markets during the global economic crisis has serious consequences for subcontracted home-based workers. Asia's tightly integrated supply chain transmitted the external demand shock rapidly; between September 2008 and February 2009, exports fell at an annualized rate of about 70 percent in emerging Asia (International Monetary Fund 2009b). Lower demand has resulted in lower volumes of contracts; 60 percent of subcontracted participants reported that they had received smaller and more infrequent contracts from middlemen in the previous six months. Nearly half of the subcontracted home-based workers reported working fewer hours each day (49 percent) and fewer days per week (44 percent) than they did six months earlier. This in turn affected their incomes; 64 percent of them reported that their incomes had fallen in the previous six months.

Declining income among customers in local markets significantly affected the self-employed home-based workers; 84 percent of these workers reported decreased demand over the previous six months, while 75 percent reported that the volume of their trade had decreased in this period. However, lower demand or volume of sales did not translate into decreased work hours among the self-employed. Unlike subcontracted home-based workers, self-employed workers do not depend on middlemen to provide them with work orders. Rather, self-employed workers often worked longer hours to maintain their profit margins. Thirty-four percent were working more hours each day, while their days of work

each week remained largely stable. Nevertheless, a huge proportion (84 percent) of self-employed home-based workers reported that their monthly incomes had fallen during the first half of 2009.

Both self-employed and subcontracted home-based workers reported increased numbers of workers in their sectors—34 percent and 36 percent of respondents, respectively. According to respondents, women are turning to home-based work in much greater numbers than men, which is consistent with the precrisis gender composition of the sector. Yet not all those seeking such work are finding it. A self-employed home-based worker in Thailand reported, “About twenty women who were laid off from the factories, including a woman with a newborn baby, came to ask me for piece work,⁴ but I have no work to give them.”⁵

Subcontracted home-based workers, most of whom are women, are particularly vulnerable. In conditions of excess labor supply, piece rates (the normal form of payment for these workers) can be driven very low and thus their share in the value chains falls further, even though many such workers are highly skilled. Among subcontracted workers in the study, nearly 50 percent reported that the piece rate they receive had fallen in the previous six months.

Street Vendors

Hard economic times are reducing the buying power of local consumers. It might be expected that this would present a potential opportunity for street vendors to find new customers among those looking for cheaper goods. Unfortunately, few street vendors are reaping such rewards. Of the street vendors participating in the study, 62 percent reported that

their volume of trade had dropped since January 2009. Retrenched and underemployed workers, many from badly affected manufacturing industries, are curbing their consumption, even when it comes to cheaper goods.

An additional factor creating pressure on street vendors has been the rise in number of vendors in many urban trading areas. With the low barriers for entry, street vending is often the first point of entry for retrenched or underemployed workers, whose ranks have swollen during the crisis. Overall, street vendors were the group most likely to have noticed more competition in its sector, with 85 percent of vendors reporting new traders in their trading areas in between January and July 2009. The majority of respondents reported that these new entrants are mostly women. This may be because in the developing countries women are concentrated in sectors, such as export manufacturing, and in employment statuses, such as noncore work, that have been particularly vulnerable to the recession in the Global South. Indeed, this may help explain the disproportionate numbers of women that were reported to be entering the informal sectors of the study.

Traders also noted that the downturn in the economy has been accompanied by rising business cost both in terms of their primary business costs (most often the price of raw materials or cost of ready-made goods) and secondary business costs (such as transportation, utilities, and market fees). National and municipal revenues in most countries are under pressure due to the crisis. While fee hikes by authorities and private market operators may not have the deliberate intention of intensifying the crisis, these actions are nonetheless making business

more expensive for vendors when they can least afford it. In response, several vendors reported that they had moved to unregulated vending spaces on the street in order to avoid these fees.

Despite the increased costs of doing business, relatively few street vendors reported increased sales prices for their goods (price per unit sold) that would offset the cost of their inputs. While 83 percent of street vendors reported increased business costs since January 2009, only 58 percent reported increasing the prices of their goods over the same period. Fearful of losing more customers, some vendors reported changing the volume of their stock, the quality of their goods, and/or the variety of their products in order to minimize their losses. These short-term strategies add risk and uncertainty to the trade and may heighten economic vulnerability over the long term.

The combined effect of fewer customers, higher business costs, and increased competition has taken a toll on many street vendors. In the study, 77 percent of participants reported that their weekly profit had decreased between January and June 2009. This is very bad news for women, who account for the majority of street vendors in many countries, especially in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America. Even in good times, women tend to earn less than male vendors. Compared to men, female street vendors are more likely to operate in insecure or illegal spaces, trade in less lucrative goods, generate a lower volume of trade, and work as commission agents or employees of other vendors. The crisis is now creating greater pressure on women's meager incomes, which will likely force them farther to the margins of their sector.

Waste Pickers

The recession in industrialized countries has reduced demand for exports from key manufacturing countries, particularly the People's Republic of China, and weakened the market for the recyclables used in the production or packaging of export goods. This began to influence international pricing dynamics as early as October 2008. In the study, waste pickers experienced the sharpest decline in demand and selling prices among the sectors investigated. Table 3 depicts the price changes reported by waste pickers in three cities between January and June 2009. The table reveals that the reported prices for waste materials had, on average, dropped by 5 percent to 7 percent for those picking waste at two locations in Pune, India, while the prices dropped by as much as 42 percent and 50 percent in Bogotá, Colombia, and Santiago, Chile, respectively.

During crises, economic stress is often shifted down the chain, and losses are transferred disproportionately to informal waste pickers, who typically occupy the bottom rung of local and global supply chains. Waste pickers in Indian cities receive as little as 5 percent of the price that industry pays for recyclables, while middlemen pocket the rest (Medina 2005). In addition, in many developing countries, a clear majority of street and dump pickers are women and children, while men are more likely to be involved in the processing and selling of recovered materials and are more likely to be middlemen and managers (Furedy 1990). The relatively low position of women in waste industry supply chains typically makes them even more dependent during hard times; previous studies have also concluded that women are often paid less for the waste materials they sell and

Table 3. Price Changes for Selected Categories of Waste Materials Reported by Waste Pickers, January–June 2009 (%)

Material	Santiago, Chile	Bogotá, Colombia	Pune, India (Infosys)	Pune, India (University)
Cardboard	-58	-20	-7	-16
Office paper	-50	-27	-1	-12
Scrap paper	-60	-50	-2	-4
Newspaper	—	-50	-4	0
Glass	—	-17	0	0
Plastic				
Blow-moulded	—	—	-4	-10
Injection	—	—	-13	-2
PET	—	-23	-7	-11
Ferrous metal	-70	-57	-17	+7
Aluminium	-59	-37	-13	+9
Plastic bags	—	+86	0	-12
Milk bags—plastic	—	—	-20	-12
Average change for all materials reported	-50	-42	-7	-5

receive less by way of advances or loans from middlemen (Muller and Scheinberg 2003).

As suggested by Christine Furedy, women can improve their earnings when they are involved in strong cooperative organizations that intervene with intermediaries and traders (Furedy 1990.) In the study, the waste pickers in Pune, India, while all women, reported less dramatic price declines than both their male and female counterparts in Latin America. The Pune waste pickers were involved in highly organized waste-recycling schemes, with half selling waste through their own cooperative.⁶ Whether being organized

buffered them from the more dramatic price declines reported from other countries remains an empirical question that needs further investigation; however, study results seem to suggest that there was some mitigating effect.

Still, 77 percent of the waste pickers in Pune reported a decline in income over the previous six months. Being organized and having their own cooperative did not buffer Pune waste pickers from the decline in waste availability. Participants reported that reduced consumption locally, due to tough economic times, was leaving less waste for pickers to collect. Waste pickers collecting from an informa-

tion technology park noted that local firms, as a cost-saving measure in response to the recession, had reduced their use of newspapers and print paper—two very valuable waste materials. The cooperative scrap store where these workers sold their material registered an almost 50 percent drop in the total volume of material the waste pickers brought for sale.

Construction Workers

The economic downturn and the high cost of building materials in Ahmedabad, India, have curbed construction and development locally. Half the construction workers interviewed for this study indicated that their volume of work had fallen. Six months earlier, they often had ten to fifteen days of work a month, but now had only five or six. This was the case among men who worked in skilled labor, such as masonry, plumbing, and tile work, as well as women who generally provided unskilled labour, such as hauling cement or staining and sanding. Daily earnings, however, have fallen disproportionately. In February 2009, unskilled workers received 100 to 150 rupees a day for their labor, but at the time of their interviews in August 2009 were receiving 70 to 80 rupees per day. Skilled workers did not report a decline in daily earnings; they received 200 to 250 rupees a day both in February and August 2009.

Increased competition within the informal economy has also hurt workers. The Self-Employed Women's Association estimates that, in Ahmedabad, the decline of key industries such as diamond polishing due to the economic crisis has increased the number of informal workers and recently retrenched formal workers seeking work in the construction

sector by almost 25 percent (Self-Employed Women's Association 2009). Many of these new entrants are competing for work in unskilled construction work, as the barriers to entry are lower. Both men and women are taking up construction work, but women will likely be disproportionately affected, both those who were already doing unskilled construction work and those who are seeking unskilled construction jobs.

New male entrants in construction possess a physical advantage and a time advantage; with fewer household duties, they are generally able to arrive earlier at the recruitment corners (*kadiya naka*) where most construction workers gather each day to compete for construction jobs. Additionally, new female construction workers are less likely to have the skills to compete for skilled construction jobs, traditionally the preserve of men, and are forced to compete for unskilled construction jobs, thus becoming further concentrated in this lower-paying work.

In sum, research indicates that informal workers are affected by the economic crisis in many of the same ways as formal workers, suffering directly and indirectly from declining demand, shrinking consumption, and volatile prices. Moreover, informal workers face increased competition as more people enter the informal economy and as more jobs are informalized. Women are suffering disproportionately; the impact and competition are strongest in the poorest-paying and lowest barrier-to-entry informal sectors and subsectors, where women are already overrepresented. Evidence of this increasing economic stress and uncertainty at the bottom of the global economic pyramid suggests that the informal economy is

hardly a cushion during economic downturn, least of all for women.

INCREASING VULNERABILITY: INFORMALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

The economic downturn threatens to erode the fragile economic and social position of many informal workers, who often have slim margins for survival in the best of times. These effects are particularly concerning for informally employed women, who are overrepresented in the informal sector worldwide. The informal sector is the primary source of employment for women in most developing countries, and the informal economy in most countries has a higher proportion of female workers than male workers (United Nations 2000). In India and Indonesia, for example, the informal sector accounts for nine out of every ten women working outside agriculture. Figures for most other countries represented in the research sample are included in Table 4.

Women are also the most vulnerable members of the global workforce, and there is a significant overlap between being a woman, working in the informal sector, and being poor (Chen 2001). Gender-based differences in employment status within the informal economy have strong implications for relative social and economic vulnerability during crisis. Compared to the male informal workforce, women in the informal sector are more likely to be own-account workers (i.e., self-employed working by themselves) and subcontract workers and are less likely to be employers or paid employees of informal enterprises. Vulnerability—the probability that a shock will result in a decline in well-being (Mehrotra and Biggeri 2002)—is also a

function of a household's assets, which are their endowments of physical and human capital. The foundation of these assets is the stability and diversity of household income.

Critically, the vulnerability of informally employed women has actually been increasing during the crisis. Reports from respondents concerning the size and composition of households, as well as lack of diversified sources of household income, highlight the strain being exerted on female incomes. Nearly 40 percent of female respondents and just over 60 percent of male respondents reported that they were the primary income earner in their household. Even in cases where women were not breadwinners, their incomes were often critical to sustaining the income levels of their families, which had an average of six members. Three-quarters of respondents also reported that they supported children, and among these households, the average number of children was two.

There is evidence that the income-earning burden within these households may be intensifying as a result of the crisis. While Table 5 reveals that there was an average of two income earners in respondents' households, many of these other earners came from the same informal sector as the respondent. The income and employment effects reported by the study participants were therefore compounded for many families, particularly in the case of family enterprises. In addition, 20 percent of respondents also reported that a household member had become unemployed during the previous six months, and twice as many (40 percent) reported that the income of one or more household members had fallen significantly over the same period.

Table 4. Share of Nonagricultural Workforce in Selected Countries in the Informal Economy

Region	Percentage of Informal Employment as Percentage of Nonagricultural Employment, by Gender		Informal Employment as a Percentage of Nonagricultural Employment
	Women	Men	
Chile	44	31	46
Colombia	44	42	50
India	91	23	70
Indonesia	88	43	69
Kenya	83	59	60
Pakistan	61	64	NA
Thailand	54	49	47
South Africa	30	14	61

Table 5. Household Profiles

Sector	Average Number of Earners in Household	Average Household Size	Percentage of Households with Children	Average Number of Children Among Households with Children
Construction workers	2.2	4.0	50	0.9
Home-based workers	2.7	6.3	75	2.4
Street vendor	1.5	5.6	83	1.8
Waste pickers	2.0	4.8	64	2.6
All	2.2	5.6	75	1.9

Decreased household income is forcing many women to devote more and more of their time to paid work. In the study, women now working longer hours than they did six months ago reported that they were strongly driven by the well-being of their families, and their children in particular. Evidence from earlier economic crises suggests that it is generally up to women to balance the

household budget and maintain their families' living standards during a crisis (Moser 1996.) Poor working women often spend the entirety of their incomes on household expenditures, yet their shrinking incomes are being stretched even further due to persistently high food and fuel prices in many developing countries. While the origin of these price increases precedes the economic crisis, it

is important to note that the residual impacts of the food and fuel crises of 2008 are compounding the effects of the economic crisis for many families.⁷

This crisis is also heightening the role of women as gatekeepers in the intergenerational transfer of poverty. In this study, female respondents expressed particular concern about the impact of restricted household spending on their children. Food, typically allocated a large share of the household budget among the poor, is being restricted. Both the quantity and quality of food is affected—fewer meals are being served, while “luxury” items such as milk and meat are being cut.

Some respondents also reported cutting back on educational and medical expenses. While respondents reported having difficulty in paying for school fees, few respondents reported removing their children from school altogether. Limited dropout rates arguably reflect the efforts of families, in difficult circumstances, to protect what is perhaps the most important type of investment they can make, namely, their children. Medical expenditure is generally considered a luxury at the best of times. Nevertheless, some home-based workers in Pakistan reported forgoing prescription medicines for cheaper and less-effective treatments, such as home remedies for common injuries to their hands. They feared this would impact their long-term earnings because their fingers are the tools of their trade.

In an effort to keep up with rising expenses, some workers resorted to borrowing in the informal credit market from neighborhood storekeepers or local moneylenders. Some waste pickers borrowed from scrap-shop owners, while home-based workers in Thailand

reported borrowing from moneylenders to pay the debts piling up from other moneylenders. In these informal credit markets, workers were being charged upwards of 30 percent a month. These interest payments increase financial pressure on informal workers and reduce their earnings over the long term.

Despite the strategies they are employing to balance budgets, findings from the current as well as past economic crises suggest that women are struggling harder to feed their families, while still having to maintain unpaid care and domestic chores (International Labour Organization 2009). For example, while nearly 27 percent of female home-based workers reported that they were the primary earner in their household, the majority of these workers carried out child care duties alongside their home-based production. Women participating in the study also confirmed that they carried out a disproportionate amount of domestic work in their households, such as preparing family meals, cleaning the house, washing clothes, and providing hospitality to guests. Sadly, decreased incomes have meant that some women cannot afford the few conveniences that would lighten their load. A woman in Thailand reported that she could no longer buy prepared meals for her family, which had saved her time and energy in the past. This meant she now had to take more time from her income-generation activities to cook.

Finally, falling incomes, increased uncertainty, and household strain are taking a toll on the mental health of many these workers. According to respondents, their emotional resources are running low, and they reported feeling depressed and exhausted. Much of the depression was linked to feelings of failure and

disappointment in providing for their children. Workers were also sensitive to rising levels of insecurity and depression among their family members, which increased their sense of guilt. A number

This situation demands immediate and thoughtful public intervention in support of informal workers and their families. Providing social and economic protection for these workers alongside that given to

...❖ *...there is no cushion in, much less a cushion for, the informal economy. There are only an increasing number of firms and individuals competing for ever-decreasing slices of a shrinking pie.*

of women reported feeling so overburdened that they dreamed of fleeing their homes—only the thought of their children kept them from doing so.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Global recession undermines the precarious livelihoods of the traditional informal workforce and the ability of new entrants to find shelter in the informal economy (Grant 2006). Contrary to a common assumption, there is no cushion in, much less a cushion for, the informal economy. There are only an increasing number of firms and individuals competing for ever-decreasing slices of a shrinking pie. The impact on the informal economy appears to be particularly severe for women. This is not only because of their disproportionately large share of the informal economy, but also because of their relative socioeconomic vulnerability, which is likely worsening as a result of the crisis. In spite of the preponderance of figures demonstrating the toll of the global recession on formal and traditionally male sectors, many working women in the Global South have been particularly exposed to this economic storm.

their formal counterparts is critical in normal times, but particularly so during crises. Effective crisis-response strategies for these workers must be informed by the short-, medium-, and long-term view.

The worst is yet to come for many workers, and emergency relief measures are essential. Cash transfer programs targeted at specific informal sectors must be accompanied by the accelerated dispersal and suspended conditionality of existing cash transfer programs to allow use of funds for supporting livelihoods. Expanded public works earmarked for employment among the poor and vulnerable men and women are another key intervention, such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in India, passed in 2005, which guarantees employment to adult members of every rural household in India for at least one-hundred days in every financial year. Similar schemes could be implemented on a short-term emergency basis, targeted at specific sectors of informal workers and the working poor in hard-hit areas. In the long term, social protection for informal sector workers and their dependents is also critical through specially designed social insurance schemes, through social assistance, and

through the extension and reform of formal sector social insurance.

Governments must also consider sector-specific rescue plans, to be developed in consultation with informal occupational groups. Specific bailouts or rescue plans would help informal workers maintain existing employment opportunities during the crisis or secure new employment opportunities once it has ended. This does not necessarily require additional spending but reallocation of spending and adjustment of policies. Table 6 provides recommendations that should be implemented in sector-specific rescue plans. Breaking the crippling cycle of personal and household debt, aggravated by the crisis, is a priority. At the heart of this issue is the creation of access to low-interest loans and a focus on job creation for women, including incentives and skills development for girls and women in order to facilitate stable and secure employment.

Finally, in both the short and medium term, the barriers to informal activities should be reduced under the principle of “do no harm.” Laws, rules, and regulations prohibiting or undermining the livelihoods of informal workers, particularly women and working mothers, should be suspended, at least temporarily. Informal workers who have no income-earning alternatives must be permitted to make a living and support their families through the crisis. For home-based workers, this could involve suspension of policy biases that favor formal firms and workers over informal firms and workers in access to government contracts for such items as school uniforms and hospital linens. For construction workers and informal waste pickers, this could include cessation of harassment by authorities.

The global economic crisis should also be seen as a global opportunity—an opportunity to rethink economic models and policies to include the informal economy. The crisis presents an opportunity for governments and other actors to institute long-term, meaningful policy reform toward the informal economy. It also presents an opportunity to think differently about the informal workforce and to reframe the mainstreaming—or “formalization”—process as one aimed at increasing earnings and reducing risks for the working poor, not simply registration and taxation of informal enterprises. The foundation for this new thinking must be an understanding that the working poor in the informal economy needs to be *visible* in economic statistics and policies, have a voice in economic decision making, and be seen as having *validity*, or legitimacy, as economic agents and targets of economic policies.

Women tend to be the least visible and most vulnerable in the informal economy and yet are often the most powerful economic and social agents in their households and communities. Women can play a particularly important role as agents of change in this respect. On the long road to sustainable economic recovery, the mobilization and leadership of women will be critical to improving the lives of many workers and their families worldwide. For this reason, it is critical that efforts to support the informal economy include specific measures to support informally employed women and their children. In the future, greater gender-specific monitoring in the informal economy must also become a priority both for governments and for economic and international institutions.

Table 6. Sector-Specific Recommendations

Construction Workers	Home-Based Workers	Waste Pickers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion/enforcement of minimum wages for different kinds of construction activities • Enforcement of basic safety • Compensation to workers for on-site accidents • Health and life insurance, (in light of the physically demanding and often dangerous work) • Specialized skills training, particularly for women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion/enforcement of minimum wages for subcontracted workers • Access to low-interest business loans for self-employed home-based workers • Creation of formal government liaisons to enhance information and visibility • Technical and marketing assistance to self-employed workers • Provision of child care facilities and support for education among workers' children, particularly girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic price regulations • Provisions of storage and sorting facilities, tools, equipment (i.e., sacks, rakes, transportation vehicles) • Incorporation of waste pickers into solid waste management systems • Investment in research, development, and dissemination of sector-specific technologies • Education and training courses concerning new waste processing methods: e-waste, composting, bio-methanation, etc.

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ENDNOTES

¹ From author interview.

² The "informal economy" is a somewhat contested concept. In this article, the informal economy has a broad definition and includes both enterprises that are not legally regulated as well as employment relationships that are not legally regulated or protected. As such, the informal economy comprises all forms of "informal employment," that is, employment without labor or social protection both inside and outside informal enterprises, including both self-employment in small, unregistered enterprises and wage employment in unprotected jobs.

³ For a review of this evidence, see Chen et al. 1999.

⁴ Piece work describes work that is paid for each unit produced or action performed at a fixed rate.

⁵ Author interview with female home-based worker, 16 June 2009, Bangkok, Thailand.

⁶ Pune waste pickers who collect waste from Infosys sell their material to a cooperative scrap store run by their own organization, KKPKP. Those who service Pune University campus are under a formal contract between KKPKP and the university and earn a salary, apart from the money they receive through sale of scrap. Scrap is usually accumulated for a week and then sold collectively by the group. The profits are shared equally after deducting expenses.

⁷ In Indonesia, for example, respondents reported that prices rose by 15 percent to 25 percent for sugar, rice, and eggs, 50 percent for gasoline, and 40 percent for public transportation in the twelve-month period from July 2008-July 2009.

Addressing Gender Disparities: An Investigation of Nonformal Education in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

This article will define the magnitude of the access to primary education problem for girls in Afghanistan, show why the education of girls is so important, and assemble evidence on the barriers to primary education that exist for girls in Afghanistan. It will then review the literature on nonformal education, describing both the benefits and draw-

backs of such programs and the impact these programs have had on primary enrollment rates for girls in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia. It will conclude by explaining the implications these findings have for policy in Afghanistan.

Promoting education is highly ranked among the stated priorities of the new Afghan government (Farhadi 2008). This heightened priority status is understandable since only 28 percent of the adult population is literate (UNESCO 2008a) and the mean number of years of schooling for Afghans is estimated at 0.8 (World Economic Forum 2000). Within education, increasing access to primary school for girls is a top priority (Farhadi 2008). Currently, only 20 percent of girls are enrolled in primary education in Afghanistan (Waldman 2008), which poses a challenge for obtaining education as a human right while also depriving Afghanistan of the positive impact education has for individuals, communities, and nations alike. There are several reasons why the current primary school enrollment rate for girls in Afghanistan is so low, including supply-side and demand-side factors. Other countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Ethiopia face similar barriers in access to education for girls but have implemented strategies to reduce these barriers. Many of these strategies fall within the framework of nonformal education.

This article will examine the problem of access to education in Afghanistan, provide evidence of the barriers to primary education for girls, and highlight the importance of girls' education. It will then construct the policy alternatives, and after looking at the impact these policies have had in countries with similar barriers to education for girls, this article will demonstrate why nonformal

education is the best policy option for Afghanistan at this time. It will conclude by explaining the implications these findings have for policy in Afghanistan.

BACKGROUND

In the middle of the 20th century, Afghanistan was a poor, largely uneducated country with less than 5 percent of its children in school (Guimbert et al. 2008). Afghanistan's long history of

neighboring countries and ranks 174 out of 178 countries worldwide (Humidzada 2007). Fifty-three percent of the Afghan population lives in poverty, defined as less than two dollars a day (CIA 2009).

In 2001, a new democratic government was formed through the signing of the United Nations (UN)-sponsored Bonn agreement, which led to ratification of a new constitution in January 2004 (CIA 2009). Since then the government

❖ *Currently, only 20 percent of girls are enrolled in primary education in Afghanistan*

conflict, starting with the Soviet invasion in 1979, has impeded development. After a long and destructive war, the USSR withdrew in 1989, setting off a long civil war that only ended when Kabul fell to the Taliban in 1996 (CIA 2009). Under the Taliban, girls were not allowed to go to school, fewer than 900,000 boys were enrolled, and many of the boys lucky enough to go to school received a religious education in lieu of an academic one (USAID 2009). The Taliban ruled in Afghanistan until U.S. forces entered in 2001 with the goal of toppling the Taliban and pursuing al Qaeda terrorists who plotted the September 11 terrorist attacks. American and NATO troops are still in the country fighting today (Billitteri 2009).

The long period of conflict has taken a heavy toll on Afghanistan's developmental and educational progress. The human development index (HDI), a composite indicator that measures education, longevity, and economic performance, is 0.345 for Afghanistan. With this score, Afghanistan remains far below

has been working with the international community to create stability, governance, and development in Afghanistan. This includes increasing access to education for girls. Despite gains toward a stable central government, however, a resurgent Taliban and continuing provincial instability, particularly in the south and east of the country, remain serious challenges for the Afghan government (CIA 2009).

LACK OF ACCESS TO PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

Only 20 percent of girls in Afghanistan are enrolled in primary school (Waldman 2008). For every 100 boys enrolled in primary school in Afghanistan, there are only fifty-nine girls enrolled. While this is a drastic improvement from 1999, when there were only eight girls enrolled in primary school for every 100 boys (UNESCO 2008b), it still demonstrates the extent of inequity in access to primary education. Furthermore, significant disparities by province exist. Enrollment ranges from 80 percent for girls in primary school in Kabul to nearly

❖ *For every 10 percent increase in female literacy, there is a 10 percent increase in life expectancy at birth*

zero for girls in primary school in the provinces of Zabul and Badghes (Guimbert et al. 2008).

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATING GIRLS

The education of girls has far-reaching implications for individuals, families, and nations. A recent UNICEF report states: “Educating girls has cascading benefits, including helping to decrease poverty, prevent disease, eradicate violence and deter political instability” (Carwardine 2009). Education is important not only to the growth and poverty-reduction agendas, but also for empowerment, democratization, and governance in Afghanistan. Important issues involved in the education of girls include:

- **Human capital.** “Girls’ education leads to increased income, both for individuals and for nations as a whole” (Herz and Sperling 2004, 3). This is the basic premise of human capital theory, which holds that “investing in human beings is a way of increasing the overall economic productivity of a nation” (Phillips and Schweisfurth 2006, 69). The social returns to primary education are highest and benefit all of society by increasing literacy and thereby increasing basic productivity (Phillips and Schweisfurth 2006). Stephan Klasen demonstrates how gender inequality directly affects the economic growth of nations by lowering the average level of human capital: “Some 0.4-0.9 percentage points of difference in annual per capital growth rates between East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Middle East

can be accounted for by differences in gender gaps in education between these regions” (Klasen 2002, 345). Therefore, increasing girls’ access to education in Afghanistan could help mitigate the country’s economic underdevelopment and may lead to even greater income gains (Herz and Sperling 2004).

- **Positive externalities.** Education provides additional benefits to individuals and societies on top of purely economic gains. These include having smaller, healthier, and better-educated families and the empowerment of women (Herz and Sperling 2004). For example, for every 10 percent increase in female literacy, there is a 10 percent increase in life expectancy at birth (Burrows et al. 2004). Since 23.5 percent of children born in Afghanistan do not reach age five (UNESCO 2008b), educating girls in Afghanistan could significantly improve child mortality rates. Additionally, educated mothers are about 50 percent more likely to immunize their children than uneducated mothers, and an extra four years of education reduces fertility per woman by roughly one birth (Herz and Sperling 2004). Low levels of literacy among women also aggravate prejudices based on inferiority and superiority complexes between men and women (Lidonde 2004).
- **Education as a human right.** On 10 December 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations declared education a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Afghanistan voted in favor of this declaration and enshrined

the right to education for all in its Constitution (Farhadi 2008). This right has been consistently reinforced by the international community and can be seen in international agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals and UNESCO's Education for All.

REASONS FOR GIRLS' POOR ENROLLMENT

Both supply and demand factors are responsible for the poor enrollment rate of girls in primary schools. Supply-side factors include long distances to school, poor infrastructure and safety at school, and a severe shortage of female teachers. On the demand side, Afghani traditions and culture, the threat of terrorism, and the opportunity costs involved in sending girls to school are often the main factors included in decisions of whether to enroll girls in school. When examining the reasons behind the poor access rate for girls in Afghanistan, it is important to consider both supply-side and demand-side factors, as neither side alone provides an accurate picture.

SUPPLY-SIDE FACTORS

The supply-side factors influencing girls' enrollment include:

- Distance to schools. In many villages, there are no schools and girls must travel long distances to attend school. In rural areas, only 54 percent of households have a primary school in their community (Guimbert et al. 2008). This is a serious barrier to access for several reasons including girls' physical inability to get to school, time factors, safety concerns, and traditional views on girls' roles in society (Herz and Sperling 2004). The harassment of girls on their way to and from school is seen as reason enough not to send girls to school, especially from the

perspective of male relatives (Hunte 2006). Additionally, mounting insecurity in the south has had extremely negative consequences on school availability and thus girls' enrollment. According to the Afghan ambassador to the UN, 384 of the 721 schools in the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Zabul closed due to violence or threats (Waldman 2008). As a result, overall attendance for girls in these provinces remains extremely low.

- Lack of proper infrastructure and female teachers. In addition to being located far away, many schools lack basic infrastructure. According to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy's Education Sector Strategy, "[half] of all schools do not have adequate, safe or appropriate learning spaces that are conducive to parents allowing their girls to enroll in schools" (Farhadi 2008, 2). Furthermore, in Afghanistan only 28 percent of teachers are female (Farhadi 2008), and this proportion is as low as 12 percent in rural areas of the country (Guimbert et al. 2008). For many Afghans, especially those in rural areas, traditional Islamic culture dictates that girls cannot be in public with males who are not relatives. These girls cannot attend schools with male teachers and thus do not enroll or quickly drop out due to a lack of female teachers (Waldman 2008).

DEMAND-SIDE FACTORS

The demand-side factors affecting girls' enrollment include:

- Traditions and culture. A primary concern for families in Afghanistan is the "strengthening of their social networks, which is often accomplished through the marriage of their daughters" (Hunte 2006, 6). Based on results from a government survey, 42 percent of households claim that enrolling girls in primary education

“would be contrary to family commitment, the child’s marriage or their tradition” (Guimbert et al. 2008, 431). If a girl does not conform to the traditional ideals of a secluded female and attends school in a public space, many families worry about the repercussions of challenging traditional norms. Apprehension of negative gossip and negative social pressure in relation to the “preservation of family honor and the practice of seclusion of females” (Hunte 2006, 4) often cause families to keep their girls out of school.

- Threat of terrorism. The lack of security is also an important barrier to enrollment. TIME magazine reports that “[in] a little over a year, 130 schools have been burned, 105 students and teachers killed and 307 schools closed down because of security concerns. Many of those schools were for girls and most of them were in the southern provinces, where a Taliban-driven insurgency has made it nearly impossible to secure schools”

school are often primary factors inhibiting enrollment for girls. “The opportunity cost of having girls in school, in terms of lost chore time and contributions to family income, is a formidable barrier” (Herz and Sperling 2004, 8). In addition to instances of child labor in rural areas, 23 percent of girls have domestic chores that keep them from attending school (Guimbert et al. 2008). These opportunity costs directly influence the decision of whether to enroll the child, as girls often have to work to supplement the household income (Hunte 2006).

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Several policy solutions have proven successful at increasing access to primary education for girls around the world. These include constructing schools, training female teachers, conducting community sensitization, offering conditional cash transfers, and providing nonformal education. Providing conditional cash transfers to overcome barriers

❖ 42 percent of households claim that enrolling girls in primary education “would be contrary to family commitment, the child’s marriage or their tradition”.

(Baker 2008, 3). Educational institutions, students, and teachers have become targets for terrorists. This fear of violence keeps many families from sending their girls to school. Households that mentioned a security incident in the previous year on a government survey were 9 percent less likely to send their children to school (Guimbert et al. 2008).

- Opportunity costs. A household’s level of poverty and the opportunity costs involved in sending working children to

like opportunity costs and sensitizing communities to send girls to school provide little help in places where girls have no schools to attend (Herz and Sperling 2004). Thus, the need for locally available education has made school construction one of the most popular and widely recommended initiatives to increase girls’ enrollment in Afghanistan. Nonformal education also alleviates these concerns and reduces barriers associated with the distance of schools from girls’ homes (Edo et al. 2002; Rugh 2000;

Guttman and Kosonen 1994; Tietjen and Prather 1991), making it another viable option. The subsequent sections of this article will compare the advantages and disadvantages of these two policy alternatives.

OPTION 1: CONSTRUCTING SCHOOLS

Research and program experience suggests that building decent schools nearby often increases girls' enrollment in primary school (Herz and Sperling 2004). A study in Egypt found that girls' enrollment in primary school dropped off rapidly when the school was more than 1.5 km away and that new school construction boosted rural girls' enrollment by 60 percent (Rugh 2000). In the Philippines, girls' enrollment increased by 3 percent, compared to 1 percent for boys, when schools were located in the village or within a short distance (Tietjen and Prather 1991). In Malaysia, the lack of a school in a community lowers the probability of a girl attending by 17 percent (King and Lillard 1987).

DRAWBACKS OF SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

The drawbacks of this approach include:

- The role of context. Karen Tietjen and Cynthia Prather (1991) also found that context matters and that school construction has paradoxically resulted in widening the gender gap in some countries. After forty years of educational expansion in Pakistan, the attendance rate of male children has increased 30 percent, while the rate for female children has only increased by 12 percent (Tietjen and Prather 1991). This may be because the rigid format and schedule of formal schooling does not address girls' time commitments and opportunity costs

and therefore may not bring in those girls who are hardest to reach.

- Formal schooling and violence.

Additionally, formal schools are easy targets for violence carried out against girls attending school. In 2008 alone, 670 attacks on the Afghan education system were carried out, and according to the Ministry of Education, 230 people died as a result of attacks on schools, students, and personnel between 2006 and 2007 (Glad 2009). Of all the schools that have been attacked, boys' schools only account for 28 percent, clearly signaling a gender bias in the attacks (Glad 2009).

- High costs. While construction can have an impact in places where schools did not previously exist, school construction is particularly resource intensive and may redirect scarce resources from other necessary projects (Rugh 2000). For example, the U.S. military is spending more than \$300,000 to build one school in Afghanistan (Wood 2009). Putting scarce resources toward other educational inputs, such as teacher training or curriculum development, could be a more cost-effective way to increase the enrollment of girls in primary school in Afghanistan (Rugh 2000).

- The need for a more holistic approach. Although school construction can be effective in certain contexts, it is a policy that only addresses supply-side barriers. Since it is clear that the low primary enrollment rate for girls in Afghanistan is due to both supply-side and demand-side factors, any policy that hopes to increase access to education for girls must address both issues. In few, if any, cases will any one measure—building schools, training teachers, or offering scholarships—alone solve the problem. Most evidence suggests that what is needed is a package of

policies and programs (Herz and Sperling 2004).

OPTION 2: NONFORMAL EDUCATION

Nonformal education is a holistic approach that addresses both supply-side and demand-side barriers. Nonformal education can work around the constraints that keep girls out of school by providing “a structured program of learning in a non-institutional environment based on a learner-centered curriculum and flexible schedule” (Tietjen and Prather 1991, 60). Frederique Weyer (2009) explains that nonformal education is characterized by a child-centered, heterogeneous, flexible, participatory, bottom-up, and locally relevant approach. Nonformal education offers basic skills to children who are left out, pushed out, or have dropped out of formal education. Numerically, girls account for the majority of these children in low-income countries (Tietjen and Prather 1991). These programs are designed to be flexible, condensed, innovative, and tailored to local conditions and children’s needs (Edo et al. 2002; Guttman and Kosonen 1994; Rugh 2000; Tietjen and Prather 1991).

A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: WHAT MAKES NONFORMAL EDUCATION SUCCESSFUL?

In many other countries, girls face similar barriers to education. Girls in Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Ethiopia struggle with comparable barriers to access such as long distances to schools, lack of adequate infrastructure and female teachers, traditions that do not promote education for girls, and high opportunity costs for schooling. As outlined below, the literature shows that nonformal education has been effective at increasing access to primary education for girls in

these four countries. Afghanistan can learn from this comparative perspective and from the successes and failures of nonformal education programs enacted in these countries. Successful programs are characterized by convenient scheduling, local meetings, and appropriate pedagogy, as well as by addressing specific community needs rather than rigid formal requirements (Rugh 2000). The key factors in nonformal education include flexible class schedules and conducting classes in community spaces or homes.

Flexible scheduling reduces the opportunity costs associated with schooling and increases demand for education by enabling girls to attend classes without neglecting their responsibilities at work or at home. In Nepal, the Cheli Beti Project provides one-year basic literacy and numeracy training to girls ages six to thirteen in the remote Seti zone (Tietjen and Prather 1991). Classes are held in the morning before girls must start their chores, which has proven to be an effective way to increase girls’ enrollment (Tietjen and Prather 1991). In Bangladesh, the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) runs a nonformal education program with 4,500 experimental schools and 100,000 children, 70 percent of whom are girls (Tietjen and Prather 1991). BRAC classes meet for two and a half to three hours per day, at times decided by parents, and this flexible scheduling has greatly increased access to primary education for girls in Bangladesh (Tietjen and Prather 1991).

Likewise, flexible scheduling has had positive impacts on girls’ enrollment in India. In 1979, the Indian Institute of Education launched the Promoting Primary and Elementary Education

Project (PROPEL) in 110 villages in India (Guttman and Kosonen 1994). This nonformal education program involves the community and also includes a flexible schedule. Classes are held between 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., after children have finished their work, and the school follows the agricultural calendar (Guttman and Kosonen 1994). Save the Children's initiative in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Community Schools Project, also demonstrates the positive impact of flexible scheduling on girls' access to education (Edo et al. 2002).

Conducting classes locally, in community spaces or family homes, addresses the problems stemming from distant schools without requiring an influx of resources for school construction. By eliminating the need to travel great distances, concerns regarding girls' physical inability to get to school, time spent traveling, safety concerns, and the apprehension of challenging established gender norms are mitigated. In the Cheli Beti Project in Nepal, classrooms may be a local house, the village square, or an open field—whatever is convenient and available (Tietjen and Prather 1991). Holding classes in community spaces also guarantees that the classes follow cultural norms, for example, keeping girls within the home or with peers of the same sex, which alleviates many parents' fears about schooling. Furthermore, as “invisible schools,” nonformal schools often stay open during conflicts when formal schools close or become targets of violence (Tietjen and Prather 1991). This makes them an especially appealing approach in Afghanistan, where the threat from violence and terrorism is formidable.

Similar community-based classrooms can be seen in BRAC in Bangladesh,

where classroom space is rented from a group or individual in the community (Tietjen and Prather 1991); in PROPEL in India, where classes are held in community facilities (Guttman and Kosonen 1994); and in Ethiopia, which uses home-based schooling options (Edo et al. 2002).

DRAWBACKS OF NONFORMAL EDUCATION

Drawbacks of nonformal education include:

- **Quality assurance.** Andrea Rugh (2000) finds that occasionally nonformal schools are of poor quality and are unsuccessful in providing basic skills and competencies to their disadvantaged students. In Bangladesh, while the vast majority of BRAC graduates gain access to formal secondary schools (more than 90 percent), the retention rates are low and below the rates of those who continue from formal primary school (Rose 2009). There is also concern that nonformal education could exacerbate inequalities between those who have access to mainstream education and those who instead attend nonformal programs (Rose 2009).
- **Employment opportunities.** One area that has been neglected in our understanding of nonformal programs is their impact on livelihood outcomes (Rose 2009), partially because there is still insufficient knowledge available on the relationship between nonformal education and employment (Weyer 2009). Weyer shows that in Mali, nonformal education has no effect on the scope of activities in which young people engage when they stay in their village, but does improve the way these activities are

carried out as well as widen their employment opportunities as they migrate.

- **Scale.** Many nonformal education programs show promising returns but have annual unit costs higher than those of government schools (Rose 2009). This casts doubt on the scalability and sustainability of such programs, and so far, these questions remain unanswered (Tietjen and Prather 1991).

RESULTS OF NONFORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Despite its drawbacks, nonformal education has significantly increased access to primary education for girls in Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Ethiopia. For example, Nepal increased its net enrollment ratio (NER) from 59 percent in 2000 (UNESCO 2000) to 79 percent in 2006 (UNESCO 2008b) even amid a destabilizing civil conflict. It also improved its gender parity index by 30 percent, almost reaching gender parity for primary education in 2006 (UNESCO 2008b). Despite intensive school construction by the government and communities in recent years, many primary schools are still too far away for girls to attend (UNESCO 2000). As a result, nonformal education has provided an alternative that gives access to education for many girls. Between 1992 and 1993 and 1996 and 1997, 1.8 million students were enrolled in nonformal education in Nepal, an estimated 70 percent of whom were girls (UNESCO 2000). Additionally, 1.4 million of those 1.8 million graduated with sufficient skills to be deemed literate (UNESCO 2000).

Nonformal education has also helped Bangladesh make great strides toward universal primary education and gender parity. While invisible in the government's Primary Education Development

Program, NGO provision of nonformal education is relatively prominent in Bangladesh (Rose 2009). In large part due to BRAC, Bangladesh's NER is 89 percent and it achieved gender parity in 2006 (UNESCO 2008b), with a dropout rate of only 1.5 percent for the three-year course, daily attendance exceeding 95 percent, and 95 percent of students passing national examinations allowing them to enter formal schooling at grade four (Tietjen and Prather 1991).

The PROPEL project in India has reached 4,500 children, 3,000 of whom are girls (Guttman and Kosonen 1994). The annual dropout rate is 20 percent, which is significantly lower than the dropout rate of 50 percent to 70 percent in formal schools (Tietjen and Prather 1991). Furthermore, girls are more likely to stay in the program, as only 18 percent leave the program compared with 21 percent of boys (Tietjen and Prather 1991). Students in the program scored higher on evaluations than students in the formal education system (Guttman and Kosonen 1994).

The Ethiopian Community Schools Project has also increased access to basic education for girls. Of the students in the program, 57 percent are girls, compared to the national average of 41 percent in formal education (Edo et al. 2002). As Tietjen and Prather state: "What is striking about most of these nontraditional efforts is that, even when located in countries, regions, and cultures that have proven most reluctant to girls' formal education, girls flock to them, persist, and experience a high degree of success" (Tietjen and Prather 1991, 70).

COMPARING POLICY ALTERNATIVES

As outlined above, nonformal education has proven to be successful at increasing access to primary education for girls who previously had none due to an array of cultural and geographic contexts. Flexible class scheduling reduces the opportunity cost of education by enabling girls to complete their responsibilities at home and at work while still attending school. Removing the barrier of class scheduling greatly increases demand for education for girls. Conducting classes in community spaces or family homes alleviates security concerns and the prospects of education-related violence, ensures that classes follow cultural norms, decreases travel time, and assuages concerns about inadequate facilities. These are all important obstacles to girls' educational access in Afghanistan, and mitigating these barriers has proven to enhance primary school enrollment of girls in other countries around the world.

Additionally, school construction has had mixed results in terms of its impact on access to primary school for girls. Tietjen and Prather (1990) found that context matters and that school construction has paradoxically resulted in widening the gender gap in some countries.

Additionally, formal schools are easy targets for violence (Glad 2009).

The drawbacks to nonformal education, however, need to be addressed. Quality assurance issues can be overcome with a strong governmental monitoring and evaluation system and with the eventual incorporation of nonformal programs into the formal, government system.

While the impact of nonformal education on labor market opportunities is not yet evident, early research is promising. Even in nonformal education, girls still reap

the additional benefits of education, such as smaller, healthier, and better-educated families; the empowerment of women; and increased life expectancy at birth.

Although high-quality nonformal education may have higher annual unit costs than the traditional formal schooling currently being offered in Afghanistan (Rose 2009), it is still more cost-effective than resource-intensive school construction (Rugh 2000). It cost the U.S. military more than \$300,000 to build just one school in Afghanistan in 2009 (Wood 2009). Nonformal education would use available, safe, child-friendly community spaces or community homes and therefore would not require the tremendous influx of resources necessary for school construction. This would enable those resources to be utilized for other important purposes, such as teacher training and curriculum development, while still addressing the barriers that distant schools present.

Additionally, with the influx of foreign monetary support into Afghanistan, funds are available to cover the higher annual unit costs of high-quality nonformal education programs, pacifying concerns about the scalability of such a policy. Hopes are that, over time, the policy would increase Afghanistan's economic well-being and prove to be sustainable. After assessing these trade-offs, it is clear that nonformal education is a more effective and cost-effective policy option to increase access to primary education for girls in Afghanistan than school construction.

ADAPTING NONFORMAL EDUCATION TO MEET AFGHANISTAN'S NEEDS

The nonformal education policy in Afghanistan should draw upon the successes of nonformal education programs enacted in other countries with similar contexts. As indicated above, such programs include community involvement, classes conducted in community spaces or homes, and flexible schedules. Likewise, the nonformal education policy in Afghanistan should promote classes conducted in safe community-sanctioned spaces, near to girls' homes in a culturally sensitive way.

CONCLUSION

Currently, access to primary education for girls in Afghanistan is severely limited and a growth rate of approximately 8 percent per year is needed to meet universal access by 2020 (Farhadi 2008). This is a goal the Afghan government should be devoted to realizing, because the benefits of educating girls are vast and include economic growth, better health outcomes, and increased political stability.

Nonformal education provides a holistic approach that addresses both the supply-side and demand-side factors that prevent girls from accessing primary education.

Research about nonformal education programs implemented in Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Ethiopia demonstrates the positive impact nonformal education can have on access to primary education for girls who experience barriers similar to those in Afghanistan. Nonformal education must also be paired with policies that promote the training of female teachers, and the implementation of this nonformal education policy must be carefully monitored in order to ensure quality. If all of these conditions are met, nonformal education can aid Afghanistan

in reaching universal access to primary education for girls.

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War, Militarism, and Gender: An Interview with Cynthia Enloe

Interviewed by Dan Ginsburg

On 11 January 2010, *WPJH* Senior Editor Dan Ginsburg sat down with Clark University Professor Cynthia Enloe to get her perspective on a wide range of issues. Enloe's feminist teaching and research has focused on the interplay of women's politics in the national and international arenas, with special attention to how women's labor is made cheap in globalized factories and how women's emotional and physical labor has been used to support governments' war-waging policies—as well as how many women have tried to resist both of those efforts. She is the author of numerous books, including *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* and *The Curious Feminist*. Her latest work is *Nimo's War, Emma's War: Making Feminist Sense of the Iraq War*.

Dan Ginsburg is pursuing a master in public policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Ginsburg is a graduate of Wesleyan University. He served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Ukraine from 2005 to 2007.

WPJH

The Bush administration often co-opted women's rights empowerment as justification for the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. President Barack Obama's December 2009 speech at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point articulating U.S. strategy in Afghanistan moving forward emphasized national security as the primary driver for the U.S. presence and military action. There was very little mention of human rights and no mention of women and women's rights.

ENLOE

So that's the good news. It's not just instrumentalist. With Bush, Rumsfeld, and Cheney, the main architects of the Afghan war, I think it really was instrumentalist. During 2003 to 2008, one didn't see any follow-through on women's security or women's education. There were people in the field who cared about it, but not at the level of "U.S. national security." It is interesting to note that Obama's very internationally strategized speech in December really left women's rights and security out altogether. So then what you want to know is, where was it in the drafts? . . . Did somebody at some point say, "Okay, we do actually care about women's security in Afghanistan; in fact, we care about it more than the Bush administration did"? . . . I bet in an early draft it was there, and I bet there was a discussion, and someone there asked, "How can we mention women's rights as part of our surge mission without sounding shallow and instrumentalist?"

But the real question is what the discourse will be at the mid-levels and at the ground levels of U.S. officials. And what the new police force will look like. Now that the Obama plan is to expand the whole Afghan security sector—not just the army—one needs to ask if there

will be women in the military and police. I have mixed feelings about women in militaries, but it is one organization that is due to become very powerful in Afghan political life. Where will women be in the civilian bureaucracy, particularly in the ministries that are now headed by the warlords in [Afghanistan President Hamid] Karzai's cabinet?

WPJH

In the same speech, Obama used the phrase "successful conclusion" for Afghanistan and asserted that, "Today, after extraordinary costs, we are bringing the Iraq war to a responsible end." In *The Curious Feminist*, you wrote, "Wars don't simply end. And wars don't end simply." What are we ignoring when we see an end to a military presence and combat operations as a simplified "end" to a "war?"

ENLOE

I'm not sure whether Obama or any of his senior advisers really believes that. Certainly nobody on the ground in Iraq believes that when the U.S. troops pull out in August that it's the end of a war. . . . Wars don't simply end. In fact there are many people who think the Vietnam War isn't yet over. There are so many U.S. and Vietnamese veterans who are still distressed, so many families taking care of those veterans. And the Vietnamese people have had to think about how they choose to memorialize the war. It's never obvious after any war. There's a wonderful historian named Karen Turner who's written a book with a Vietnamese coauthor about what happened to those Vietnamese women who fought with the North Vietnam's army thirty years after the Vietnam-U.S. War. Their war definitely isn't over.

WPJH

Let's stay on Iraq, then. Can you describe the experiences or insights that inspired your latest book *Nimo's War, Emma's War*?

ENLOE

In the lead-up to the Iraq war in 2003, I was teaching at a university in Tokyo. My Japanese feminist friends took me along to anti-war marches. And I stood with the local members of Women in Black in Tokyo. . . . My interest in those months was in trying to imagine women's relationships to the coming Iraq war. The first people I tried to imagine were Japanese women married to those Japanese naval officers then being sent out to the Indian Ocean as the Japanese government's contribution to the Afghanistan war. . . .

Soon, I was asked to do talks around the U.S. and in Europe about militarism and feminism. Does asking feminist questions shed any light on the Iraq war? We learn better, I think, when we are specific. I began to use an Iraqi woman and an American woman as the anchors to all my talks. If you can tell a story and then build your analysis off the story, people may forget about your analysis but they'll remember the story. And if they remember the story, they might even remember a bit of the analysis.

The first woman I learned about, because of really good reporting by *New York Times* reporter Sabrina Tavernise, was Nimo. Tavernise decided to spend an afternoon in Nimo's small Baghdad beauty parlor in April of 2003 as a way to cover the war. I thought that was brilliant. And I got very interested in this woman, Nimo, who ran this very modest beauty parlor on a back alleyway in the midst of a foreign military invasion.

Emma, the other woman in the book's title, is a Latina woman from San Antonio, Texas. I focused on her

because the U.S. Army and even the Marines began to have trouble filling their recruiting quotas, particularly as the war dragged on and became more unpopular. San Antonio high schools welcome recruiters. I wondered how Emma thought about it, because she had one son in the Air Force and another son in the San Antonio high school system. . . . I've been very interested in recruiters—how they appeal to men and how they appeal to women. If you want to do a bit of field research, just watch the two sets of military television advertising strategies. One is during NFL games—very much to the guys. But, during weekday afternoon reruns, the ads are aimed at mothers. Nobody has yet done a single study of the advertising agency's ways of working with the Pentagon.

WPJH

Strategies for young women?

ENLOE

The U.S. military's recruiting ads don't seem to be as aimed at young women. They seem to be aimed at parents, to reassure mothers and fathers that it's okay for their daughters to join the military. They're not as nervous about the parents of young men, though this began to change around 2006 or 2007. The Pentagon is one of the biggest users of social science research in the U.S.—something to keep in mind when you chart the militarization of sociology and psychology. The Pentagon learned from 2005-2006 studies that African American mothers and fathers were cooling on their enthusiasm for the kids joining the military, parents who had thought that their children joining the military was a step up, a way to get future education, a way to be seen as a first-class citizen. But that changed in the middle of the Iraq

war. So now, some of the Pentagon ads aimed at mothers are aimed deliberately at African American mothers—and mothers of sons—to convince them that military enlistment still is a good thing for their sons.

Military recruiters in any country love bad economies. They could never say it out loud, but every time the unemployment rate inches up a percent, it makes them very happy. Since the financial crisis in 2009, recruiters are all filling their quotas. Have African American parents remained cool with the surge in Afghanistan?

WPJH

What were your key takeaways from working on the book? And what do you hope readers will get out of it?

ENLOE

The book focuses on eight women—four Iraqi women and four American women. The main thing I want readers to take away is that Iraqi women are thinkers. They are activists. They are organizers. They have histories. They have memories. They have strategies. They have analyses. Iraqi women in wartime have had to constantly strategize about how to take care of their kids if they have kids, how to get a job, how to keep a job, how to have any lobbying influence in the Green Zone. A lot of Iraqi women who stayed in Iraq organized to have influence on the drafting of the new Constitution. Today they lobby the Iraqi Parliament. And there are some feminists. Twenty-five percent of the Iraqi Parliament is now women, but those women are very diverse. Some are under the influence of male party leaders, not all have developed a feminist consciousness—just like the U.S. Congress, right?

The other takeaway is to realize that wars cannot be waged unless you persuade or pressure enough women to do the kind of work it takes to wage a war. If women went on strike and refused to give permission for the kids to join the military, or refused to take care of wounded sons and daughters when they came home as veterans, or refused to be silent as military wives...if women refused, states couldn't wage a war.

WPJH

In a talk you gave here at the Kennedy School, you spoke about governments privatizing care for the physically and mentally war wounded. It's something we very much take for granted, that it's an expectation.

ENLOE

Yes! It's what mothers and wives "naturally" do, right? Wars are waged by officials who count on women to feel no option but to do it. British feminist historian Ana Carden-Coyne is investigating what happened to the war wounded after World War I. It's opened my eyes. The whole profession of physical therapy was created out of World War I. And it was a feminized profession right from the start. Now I think about the wounded a lot more, including mentally wounded. The number of wives and girlfriends and mothers who live with sons and some daughters with PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] is just amazing. PTSD is not just an "American disease." It's an Iraqi disease. It's a Cambodian disease. It's an Afghan disease. It's a Vietnamese disease. And it's completely hidden. Most governments don't want to hear about the mental health repercussions from their military operations. War-waging governments always try to shed responsibility. If governments took full responsibility for

the aftereffects of their war waging, they wouldn't be able to persuade many people to support a war.

There's now a PTSD ward in one of the Baghdad hospitals just for Iraqi children. One. Militias began targeting doctors, nurses, and psychiatrists, so there are very few left in Baghdad. We don't think about Iraqi PTSD. When you read about the latest bombing in Mosul or Kirkuk or Baghdad, you learn about how many were killed and how many wounded. But do we become curious about who's going to take care of those severely wounded, at what emotional and economic cost?

In this book, I really dug more deeply than I ever have both into the militarization of mental health care and the dependence of war-waging U.S., Iraqi, and British governments on wives and girlfriends and mothers.

WPJH

So was that one of the surprises for you?

ENLOE

Yes. You'd think that after years of working on this stuff, I'd have thought of everything. Well, I haven't. Now I think a lot more about the politics of wives and mothers of wounded soldiers, how much governments hope they'll stay silent, hope they won't realize they're doing political work, and hope they won't publicly lobby for more assistance.

WPJH

We're engaged in a highly militarized "war on terror." It seems to me that public discourse often simplifies or glosses over the motivations of "terrorists," even when the terrorists themselves articulate them. Those motivations often include our conduct in "the war on terror," creating a vicious circle of violence. Is this a fair assessment?

ENLOE

I think your assessment really is...I was going to say—on target! Isn't that awful militarized language? Is a bomber pilot a terrorist? You can't be more terrorized by anybody than by having a piloted bomber directly above you or a drone being directed remotely by somebody on the banks of the Potomac.

We've done the world a discourse disservice by spreading this simplistic notion of "the terrorist," as if that's all you need to know about somebody. Or the "war on terror," without asking why. How does somebody become convinced that wielding violence—whether in a state uniform or civilian clothes—is the solution both to their problems and society's problems? Are men or women who form militias deluded? Are men or women who join states' militaries deluded? Delusion works at many levels—with us all!

WPJH

The word that gets me is "extremist." Not to discount the need for military, but to me a lot of military action is pretty darned extreme. But if you're in uniform, it's not extreme...

ENLOE

It's "legitimate." And if you're legitimate you couldn't be extreme.

WPJH

Is our discourse on and understanding of "the war on terror" sufficiently gendered?

ENLOE

What's happened in the last three or four years is that "the woman suicide bomber" has become a kind of public figure. So some people imagine they've gained gendered awareness, because they now recognize that women can hide bombs under their clothes. Actually, one of the

ways the Algerian independence movement of the 1950s defeated the French military was using women to carry bombs. So long as women are imagined to be apolitical and "harmless," insurgents can use them to wield violence. Motivated by this shallowly gendered analysis of terrorism, the Iraqi police has begun recruiting more women to search women at checkpoints. Now that isn't a gender analytical or policy breakthrough.

A more sophisticated—and useful—gendered analysis would ask about masculinities within Iraqi political parties and militias and look at masculinities within the U.S. Army and Marines—as they shape each other. A fruitful gendered analysis would look at the intra-family relationships between women and the men who join militias. Men who join militias often get paid as much as \$50 per month. So when there is high male unemployment, a wife, sister, or mother may be unenthusiastic about a young man in a household joining a militia, but will weigh that against her need for money to sustain family in wartime.

WPJH

We understand and experience our lives in highly gendered terms and organizations. Gender and women's studies is seen not as mandatory but rather as a specialized field. You can go all the way through institutes of higher learning without acquiring the tools of "gender analysis." Do colleges and universities need to put more emphasis on gender into the curriculum?

ENLOE

Yes. With so much mainstreaming going on now in all courses—this is the sanguine view—maybe we don't need women's studies anymore? I think of all the courses that nonfeminist faculty teach, courses during which gender just

....disappears. And these are good people. But gender? A course on elections and maybe it gets mentioned twice—you know, “the women’s vote” or the gender gap in American electoral politics. But is it mentioned in a course on the history of warfare? Or on military-civic relations? Or state-building? Or the politics of globalization? Uh uh. It just disappears. Too many faculty treat gender analysis as if it were an arcane specialty, rather than a way to make sense of the world. Gender analysis doesn’t displace other forms of analysis, but it certainly sharpens our exploratory capacity.

WPJH

Here at the Kennedy School there’s a lot of gender study, but again it’s if you’re interested.

ENLOE

It’s optional. Which means that probably 80 percent of all the people who go through the Kennedy School think that it’s a mere “extra” too, so they end up being kind of “gender dumb,” which I certainly was when I came out of Berkeley. To deprive oneself of sophisticated analytical tools is a mistake—a risky mistake.

A wonderful example: when the Obama administration first introduced its stimulus package in 2009, it looked like a 1930s stimulus package—public works construction. A national network of feminist economists and feminist social scientists who work on labor said, “Excuse us! Has anyone done a gender analysis of what this stimulus package is going to do? If you leave it at construction, it is going to prioritize men’s jobs.”

So these feminist economic analysts really rallied, and they wrote a very coherent, persuasive letter to the Obama administration and said, “You really need

to do a gender analysis here.” Women are unemployed too, especially they are underemployed. Some of Obama’s senior policy advisers listened. They revised their approach. The stimulus package they launched became one aimed at construction and education and the environment. Public policy didn’t demasculinize the construction industry, but at least it treated the current job market more realistically.

WPJH

That’s something I didn’t really see in the public discourse. It seems as though it worked behind the scenes.

ENLOE

That would be a really good learning moment. For us all to see how it happened. And I wouldn’t have known except I became one of the letter’s signatories.

WPJH

On that note, you use a “feminist curiosity” to call into question convention and orthodoxy in terms of militarization, national security, gender, patriarchy, even sneaker manufacturing. What questions should a good, curious feminist be asking in 2010?

ENLOE

Always ask, “Where are the women?” Especially if they’re not there or if they’re the only ones there. But then follow up and ask, “Why are women there, but not someplace else?” Ask, “Who has a stake in them not being there?” Keep going, ask, “Who has a stake in them being only there?” And, “What do they think about they’re being there?” And, “What are they doing while they’re there?” And, “Who is comfortable with them being there?” And, “Who is feeling uncomfortable?”

Finding Local Solutions: A Conversation with 2009 Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom

*Interviewed by Mattea Kramer and
Heidi Fiesemann*



Elinor Ostrom, the cofounder of the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis and the Arthur F. Bentley Professor of Political Science at Indiana University, Bloomington, became the first woman to win the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2009. This international recognition acknowledged her research in the field

of economic governance of common resources. Her publications, such as her book *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, dispute long-held economic theories regarding how common pool resources will suffer from overuse. She showed how local, self-determined communities often do a better job of regulating common resources—such as forests, fisheries, irrigation systems, and grazing lands—than governments seeking to protect or privatize such resources. Her theories and her empirical work have been applied to important and current issues such as development aid, the Internet, and the global atmosphere.

WPJH editors Mattea Kramer and Heidi Fiesemann are both master in public policy candidates at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Kramer has a background in grassroots campaigns and rural education in Uganda. Fiesemann served as a rural community health volunteer in Benin with the U.S. Peace Corps before coming to the Kennedy School. On 20 January 2010, they interviewed Dr. Ostrom about the significance of her Nobel Prize and applications of her scholarship to pressing policy issues.

WPJH

We're interested in the path you took to becoming a leader in the fields of political science and economics. Would you speak briefly about your experience as a woman rising in those fields and whether you think that the challenges you encountered continue to be barriers for women today?

OSTROM

Oh, it's changed dramatically. I was advised not to go to graduate school and getting in was a big challenge. My Ph.D. was 1965, and when I entered the graduate program at UCLA there hadn't been a woman in their program for a

long time. They had forty entering students, and four of us were women that particular fall. There was a huge controversy in the department over this because they thought that none of us would get a good job, and it was a waste of all their energy to have people who wouldn't get good jobs.

WPJH

As a woman managing the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis in 1973, did you consider your leadership and management style different from that of your male colleagues?

OSTROM

I didn't think of myself as a female leader. My husband and coleader Vincent and I were trying to get something done. I'd been hired as an adjunct earlier, and the department of political science in the early days was not very enthusiastic about the work we did. So I viewed myself more as a colleague doing unusual work, considering how we should organize it so that it was done responsibly. Colleagues around Indiana University didn't really treat me differently. When I went to Germany the first time it was a bit of a shock, because in the early 1980s there were still very few women in professional positions. They didn't know how to treat a woman. They thought they should open the door for me, and bow, and do all these things like it was a social. I had to kind of explain to them, I'll open the door for you sometimes and you open it for me, but don't do it because I'm a woman.

WPJH

The atmosphere is a very important common pool resource, and recently global leaders got together in Copenhagen to discuss our next steps to combat global warming. How do you assess their work at

attempting to regulate that very important common pool resource?

OSTROM

Well, badly. And I have written on this to some extent in more recent times where I'm arguing that we need to take a polycentric approach because if we sit around and wait for international leaders to make this decision, we're going to be waiting far too long. This isn't something that can wait. We've had this sense that everything was global; well, there are externalities at a local/regional level in addition to global externalities, so in a metropolitan area we can create local air pollution as well as putting global gases up there. If we can reduce emissions then we'll reduce local air pollution as well as the threat to the global atmosphere. We need to recognize the multiple scales of problems that have been labeled as just global. We need global solutions, no question about it, but that's not all we need. And if we just wait for those, then we may be facing a much bigger disaster than if we can start moving on a bunch of fronts.

WPJH

Our next question is about development aid, which is another very important and widely discussed common pool resource about which you've written. And much has been said about how ineffective our current ways of giving to the developing world are, and at this point in time, in 2010, would you say that we've learned anything from the extensive research that shows how ineffective our past aid has been, and are we doing any better?

OSTROM

In some cases, yes. But it's very complicated when you're trying to give away huge amounts of money. Some people

suggest creating a trust fund so that we give the money but then we help people develop the capability to learn how to develop, like microcredit. We'd use funds slowly but surely in a way that is constructive, as opposed to spending an awful lot of money on building irrigation systems that, three to five years later, don't work as well as very primitive ones.

community, can help devise rules for that micro level?

OSTROM

While Switzerland is not perfect, it is a system in which you do have national-level rules, but also a lot of regional and smaller scale rules that are perceived to be legitimate, many of which have operated for a very long time. So it's a very modern

...❖ *Is there a way to use the example of institutional diversity in Switzerland to extrapolate a philosophy we could take on as policy makers?*

WPJH

And would you say that philosophy has implications for what we're doing now in Haiti?

OSTROM

Well, emergency help is entirely different than long-term aid. So when you're dealing with an emergency, you need top-down to bring in as much food as you possibly can. Like in Katrina, that's what we had to do. But if that's all that you do, that's not enough. You can't help people prevent a hurricane or an earthquake. The equation now is to slowly but surely help people build the capacity to deal with earthquakes or tsunamis. So if all we do is just give food—which is something we must do—it's not sufficient.

WPJH

One of the major implications of your work is that rules imposed by outsiders are perceived with less legitimacy than rules established by insiders who worked collectively to reach a decision. Can you offer us examples of ways in which leaders at a macro level, who are not within the

place, but it does have a wide diversity of institutions. Much of the beauty of the alpine areas, where people go as tourists, is because of community management of the region, so that some of the tourist societies now are helping contribute funds to the pastoral groups, because there's so much benefit to them.

WPJH

For those of us who are going into careers in policy, is there a way to use that example to extrapolate a philosophy we could take on as policy makers?

OSTROM

Sure, the idea of polycentricity that Vincent and I have been working on through the years. What you want to figure out are ways that people can organize and cope with smaller-scale problems. For example, when we studied policing in the 1970s we found that many small-to-medium-size police departments in metropolitan areas were more effective than the very large ones. But the most effective metropolitan areas had some large-scale facilities such as dispatching. They

didn't get rid of the small departments, but they dispatched the departments across the area. Or crime labs—sometimes they would have a single crime lab in the local hospital that would do the criminal analysis because the hospital had the equipment anyway. So all they needed was a technician that was trained in doing the blood tests for analyzing evidence.

products have an incredible knowledge that can be drawn on, and if they're not involved in making any decisions, then they are poor decisions. I don't think it's easy. I don't think we do it just by making top-down mandates to include women. Because then what they can do is put a woman's name on a piece of paper, but she's not actually involved. It's how to

❖ *What you want to figure out are ways that people can organize and cope with smaller-scale problems.*

There, what you want are some large-scale facilities. But if everything is large scale and nothing is small to medium size, they don't work as effectively.

WPJH

The idea of allowing a local, self-determined community to regulate a common pool resource, or to let it regulate that resource jointly with government actors, is central to your scholarship. Yet in so many parts of the world, traditionally marginalized groups, including women, are likely to be excluded from the local negotiating table. How do we ensure that marginalized groups—especially women—are included in discussions over how common pool resources should be used on the local level?

OSTROM

It's a tough call. But, slowly but surely in more places there is an indication that women should be on the governing board of local community groups. And there are some women's groups now doing some community forestry on their own that are doing some fantastic work. Forestry is a good example; women who collect an awful lot of non-timber forest

get away from paper solutions to real ones. I don't think it's easy, but I think it's happening in some places. The more research that can be done, the better. Like the work of Bina Agarwal in India who's doing very serious empirical research showing how when women are involved, decisions can be better. That type of research is very important.

WPJH

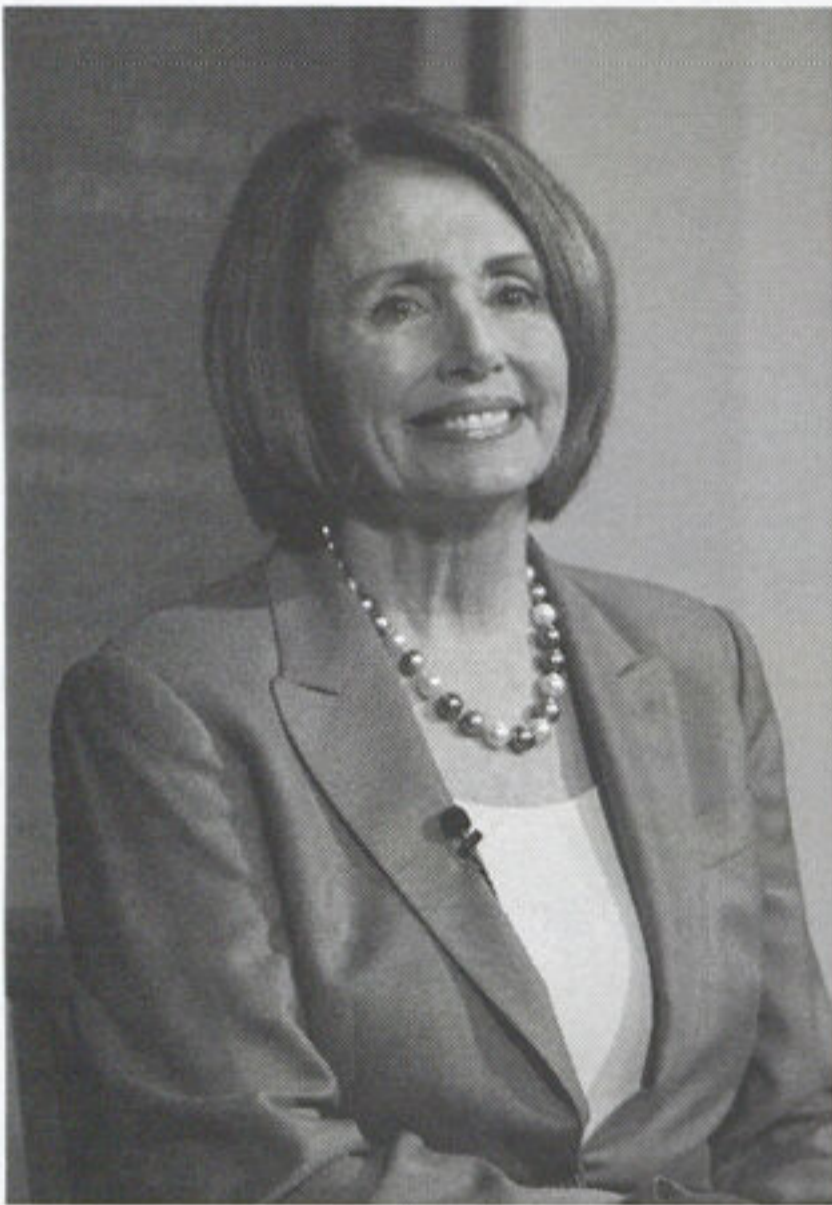
Do you have any advice for future policy makers in general or specifically for women policy makers?

OSTROM

I don't do very general things, because you can make these broad panaceas and that's where I've found we've had serious errors. It is important that those who are affected by problems have a way of expressing their voices. The decisions will be better if they are included. That is true for any group—Blacks, Hispanics, all sorts of disadvantaged groups in all countries, and for women.

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi on Health Care and Choice

Prepared by Mattea Kramer



On 13 November 2009, Nancy Pelosi, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, answered questions before a student audience at the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum at Harvard University. Interviewed by David Gergen, director of the Center for Public Leadership at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Pelosi spoke about the health care legislation that had passed in the House one week before.

Pelosi quoted the late Senator Edward Kennedy in referring to health care as “the great unfinished business of our society.” She used Kennedy’s words to insist that health care is a human right and that it should be the responsibility of lawmakers to ensure that the health insurance system does not deny American citizens the medical care they need.

Complicating what was largely considered a victory for Pelosi and other Democratic lawmakers was the Stupak amendment, named for Representative Bart Stupak of Michigan. The amendment aimed to prevent women from purchasing insurance covering abortion care if they received a federal subsidy to buy the insurance. Pressed between her values of health care as a human right and reproductive choice as a human right, and the urgency with which she and other Democratic leaders pushed for health care reform, Pelosi outlined her philosophy for negotiating the legislation.

GERGEN

Now that you’ve launched us into the conversation about health care I must follow up. There’s much work ahead. And the Senate is the next big hurdle to cross. From your perspective, what would you urge them to do about the Stupak amendment regarding abortion?

PELOSI

Well, for those of you who are skiers here, I used to say to my children when they were little: moguls are our friends. Just plant that pole and go down that hill faster. Far be it for me to give advice to the United States Senate; I have enough going on in my own House. But I have confidence that they will proceed in a way that will enable us to pass legislation that is very important.

GERGEN

Well, what I would like to know, if it were to come back out of conference without the Stupak amendment in it, can you get an affirmative vote in the House without Stupak?

PELOSI

Well let's put it this way. When we speak to those who are pro-choice, pro-life—we all consider ourselves pro-life, but on different sides of that issue—we all share three goals. One is to have health care for all Americans, secondly is to do so without any federal funding of abortion, which is the law, and third is to do so without changing the status quo—no expansion or diminishment of opportunity for women in their reproductive health. So this is about the status quo in terms of federal funding and about no expansion of access to all reproductive options, and, again, a shared value that we must have a strong health care reform for our country. So I'm optimistic that we can find a place where those principles will be honored. I'm very optimistic, and if we're all of goodwill when we go to the table to do that, we will be successful. We love our bill, and the Senate will produce a bill that will be great, and then we'll go to the table to iron out these difficulties. And what is at stake for everyone is the fact that, yes, we will have quality health care. This is not a bill about abortion. This is legislation about health care. And we have to keep it centered there. There are some who do not support health care reform who want to use this issue to eclipse all the other wonderful things that are in our bill about the expansion of coverage to 36 million more people, lowering costs, ending preexisting medical conditions as a point of discrimination in terms of access to insurance.

GERGEN

I think the public is having a hard time understanding this. Because some of your most ardent friends and supporters, especially in the pro-choice movement as you know, are upset, that's just to put it mildly, and the president himself has said it needs work. Here's the issue: Representative Stupak says this does maintain the status quo, it does meet your three tests, and the women's groups are saying it does not; it would actually diminish the capacity of women to have insurance and find an abortion. Are they right in arguing it would actually diminish...

PELOSI

Yes they are. As I say, we are not without our points of coming together on this issue. But what I want you to beware of is having this whole discussion to be about abortion. It's got to be about reforming the health insurance industry so that people have an opportunity to have access to quality health insurance with reforms that increase competition. So that no longer if you become sick your policy is rescinded or if you become sick you can no longer renew your policy. It's about having a limit on the payments that you make in but no limit on the benefits you receive or that you receive in a year or receive in your lifetime. Do you know that 60 percent of the bankruptcies in our country are caused because of medical bills, and 80 percent of those people have health insurance? But they don't have enough, and it doesn't cover what it needs to cover for them. So this legislation is absolutely necessary for the economic and health security of America's individuals and families, for the competitiveness of our business, for the dynamism of our economy. Think of it—people can have health insurance, they're free to be entrepreneurial, to take

risk, to start a business, to be self-employed, to change jobs without worrying that they're going to lose their health insurance. And on top of all of that it's absolutely essential for us to reduce the deficit. The upward spiral of medical costs in our country contributes to the upward spiral of the cost of Medicare and Medicaid that cannot be sustained—it cannot be sustained in the federal budget, it cannot be sustained in people's personal budgets.

Even if everybody in the country loved the health insurance and care that they were receiving, we can't sustain it; it is unaffordable. And as you see, the health insurance companies are already saying they're going to raise rates. If nothing is done, small businesses, which benefit enormously from our bill, their costs will go up \$2.5 trillion in the next ten years. How can they sustain that and provide health benefits for their employees? So this legislation is absolutely necessary for our economic security as well as our health security. It's necessary for putting patients first, to remove the insurance companies from coming between patients and their doctors. That's why we have such tremendous support from AARP for what it does for seniors. The list goes on and on, pages and pages of health professionals who support this. This is especially important for people with disabilities; people with disabilities benefit enormously from this legislation. And if you're a woman—do you know that women with the same coverage pay more than men? And can you imagine a small business owner hiring people knowing that if they hire a woman their insurance is going to be higher because they hired a woman rather than a man? This is outrageous. If you have children, you have a preexisting condition. If don't have children, you can't have children, you

have a preexisting condition. If you're a victim of domestic abuse, it's a preexisting medical condition. Can you imagine that? So women have a great deal to gain from this, so it behooves us all to come together to work out whatever difficulties we may have, whether it's the abortion issue you mentioned, whether it is the pay-fors in the legislation, whether it's about a public option, which I believe is the best way to keep the insurance companies honest and to increase competition.

GERGEN

In that regard, speaker, you have been passionate about a public option. I would say you've been the strongest leader in Washington to move forward to advance the idea of a public option, arguing that it is the best vehicle for bringing down cost, for bending the cost curve. Going into conference, from your perspective, is the public option non-negotiable?

PELOSI

Nothing is non-negotiable. I would say this. I would say exactly what President Obama said—and may I say, without President Obama in office, we would not have been able to pass this legislation; his leadership, his vision, his help in getting it passed was essential to our success. He said sort of what I said but he said it better. He said, “I believe that a public option is the best way to keep insurance companies honest and to increase competition to lower cost. If you have a better idea, put it on the table.” So we have been waiting for somebody to put something on the table. The month of August you saw what they put on the table. We haven't seen it yet; that doesn't mean it isn't there. But we're interested in outcomes. In other words, how do we achieve this? We will fight strongly for a public option as we go in, but I don't ever

say anything is non-negotiable going into a negotiation. But I would have a hard time passing a bill in the House that did not have the public option in it.

GERGEN
You would?

PELOSI
I would.

GERGEN
You have a hard time holding the progressive members of your caucus...

PELOSI
It's not just the progressives. Across the board. That issue was not a question of right or left, it's a question of what worked better, whether it was a negotiated public option, or a robust A or B, that was really what it was, the majority of our Blue Dogs voted for this health care bill with the public option in it.

GERGEN
I wondered whether in fact the growing number of women in the House and in the Senate has made a real difference on the balance about health care, that it put you much closer to reach, you could achieve this great milestone with more women there; it made it easier for you to get there.

PELOSI
Absolutely. Well, we wouldn't have a woman speaker without more women in the House, for one thing. And this is just a driving force to me to get this legislation passed; it's so urgent, as a mom, as a grandmother, I know that. So that my children, my grandchildren have every opportunity. It's important for every child in America to have that opportunity.

Opposing Images: “Third World Woman” and “Welfare Queen”

by Nazneen Mehta

Nazneen Mehta is a third-year law student at Columbia University School of Law in New York. She is the former development and legal fellow at All Our Kin, a nonprofit based in New Haven, Connecticut, that trains low-income women to become early childhood educators and supports them in establishing their own family child care businesses.

Consider two familiar images of poor women: Both women are impoverished, raced, struggling to meet their children’s basic needs, and living as marginalized members of their societies. But one woman lives in the “Third World”—a victim of poverty in a developing country. The other woman lives in America—a “welfare queen” (Hancock 2004). While both images convey poverty and powerlessness, each one implies a different message about the woman’s life and her ability to create a better future for herself and her family. These contrasting images and the assumptions they convey have a profound influence on U.S. public policy, creating a sharp contrast between international and domestic policies for assistance to poor women.

International development institutions and U.S. foreign policy makers have

internalized the image of the Third World mother as a vulnerable woman who is trapped in a life of poverty because of “underdevelopment.” The international and foreign policies created against the backdrop of this image seek to remedy the Third World woman’s situation through empowerment; microcredit programs and cooperatives invest in women’s economic and social empowerment as the key to increasing the well-being of the overall community and children. By contrast, underlying U.S. welfare policy for poor American women is the idea of the welfare queen—a mother who is seen not as an asset, but instead as a liability to herself, her children, and her community.

Both of these images are deeply problematic. They mask the historical and political processes that led to the poverty and structural inequality shaping these women’s lives (Esteva 1992; Roberts 1999). But while the assumptions behind the image of the Third World woman—passivity and deprivation—have led to empowerment programs and policies (UNFPA 2005; U.S. Department of State n.d.), the image of the U.S. welfare queen—characterized as lazy, irresponsible, and uncontrollably fertile—has manifested in disempowering and dispiriting welfare reform laws that dismiss the poor woman’s role as a source of strength and leadership to her family and community (Hancock 2004, 8).

IMAGES AND POLICY: POWER AND DISTORTION

These two opposing images are so powerful both because they are literally images, which are flashed on television screens and circulated in print, and because they are fixed in our minds through our associations with labels

and descriptions repeatedly cycled through public discourse. The interaction of the media, the public, and policy makers produces the constructed identities (“images”) of social groups in public discourse; these images are then part of public debate and projected through social policy (Bickford 1999; Ingram and Schneider 1995).

Ange-Marie Hancock illustrates this point in her analysis of the congressional debate surrounding the welfare reform legislation of 1996. She describes the way a congressman read into the congressional record a *U.S. News* magazine report of an unemployed mother on welfare (“Bertha Bridges”) as support for his vote to pass the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). The congressman’s use of Bertha’s story as representative of the

Lawyers and policy makers may assume that legal policy and popular representations of it are separate, but law is rarely so hermetic. Policy efforts are often beholden to the popular images of law in action (Mégret and Pinto 2003, 468). For example, Frederic Mégret and Frederick Pinto (2003) argue that images in the “war” on global terrorism (photos and footage of detainees, soldiers, and prisons) have shifted legal and policy agendas by turning public attention away from the larger geopolitical issues underlying terrorism and focusing it instead on the few visible aspects of terrorism caught in the frame of a photograph. The images of the welfare queen and the Third World woman have a similar effect on policy agendas, blocking out other considerations and narrowing public attention to the issues we can “see” in the images. The result is

❖ *While the assumptions behind the image of the Third World woman... have led to empowerment programs and policies, the image of the U.S. welfare queen... has manifested in disempowering and dispiriting welfare reform laws that dismiss the poor woman’s role as a source of strength and leadership to her family and community.*

experiences of millions of poor women meant that the journalist’s description of Bertha and her “disruptive, severely depressed son” served not only to construct the popular image of a welfare queen, but also to indelibly etch the image into the legal documents of the policy-making process (Hancock 2004, 2).

policy prescriptions that address only poor women’s most visible personal impediments: the welfare queen’s failed work ethic and the Third World woman’s oppression. What we do not see in these images is the complex web of history, power, and financial control that contributes at least as much as personal choice to the poverty these women experience.

❖ The “welfare queen” image ascribes women agency in the apparent decision to live a life of poverty.

For the Third World woman, the image of a passive victim, trapped and assailed by a poorly governed state, sets up a heroic narrative in which the international community acts as “savior”—the purveyor of financial assistance and protector of rights and economic security (Orford 1999, 696). This image of the Third World woman is set against the backdrop of a global economic hierarchy divided between the politically constructed “First” and “Third” worlds. Enshrining this division, the image of the victimized Third World woman is interwoven with a picture of heroic altruism on the part of the international First World community. This masks the history of the West as colonizers, complicit in causing the poverty and powerlessness of people in the developing world, and as perpetuators of colonial-style economic relations today (Schoepf et al. 2000, 96-101).

Similarly, the image of the welfare queen is the product of a denial of the legacy of slavery and segregation in the United States. These political institutions contributed to the historical denigration of African American motherhood and the economic disenfranchisement that underlies the persisting need for social aid programs (Roberts 1999, 22). By ignoring this history and its effects, the raced image of the welfare queen suggests poverty created by personal moral failing, without reference to social and historical context. Beyond simply ignoring the effects of macro political and economic forces on women’s lives, the “welfare queen” image ascribes

women agency in the apparent *decision* to live a life of poverty.

IMPLEMENTING IMAGES THROUGH POLICY

This dichotomy of images has significant public policy consequences that are visible in the differences between U.S. federal welfare “reform” laws and the poverty alleviation programs promoted by U.S. policy makers and international development institutions.

The congressional and public debates on welfare reform leading up to the passage of the PRWORA were coded in gendered and raced language that targeted poor women’s behavior as a root cause of family poverty. Analyzing shifts in the racial images of news coverage of the poor from the 1960s to the 1990s, Martin Gilens found that in the latter part of the period, images of African Americans were used at rates double their actual percentage of America’s poor (Gilens 1999, 123). As noted above, the image of the welfare queen was actively invoked in congressional debate on the PRWORA, and the stereotypes underpinning the image seemed to justify the law’s harsh restrictive conditions on aid to poor women and their children (Gilens 1999, 92).

The reforms targeted single mothers in poverty by enforcing term limits on their receipt of aid, instituting family caps barring additional aid to mothers who gave birth to children while on welfare, and strictly tying benefits to proof of work, while revoking benefits for mothers who were students (Pierson-Balik 2003). When the PRWORA was reauthorized in

2005, it included more than \$100 million a year to implement programs encouraging women receiving welfare to marry (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services n.d.). The federal law also allowed states to experiment with incentives and restrictions, which led some states to propose voluntary sterilization of poor women in return for more welfare benefits (Pierson-Balik 2003).

These reforms did nothing to cultivate poor women's education level, their autonomy, or their potential as leaders and advocates for their communities. The aim was to get women into work—any work—even if the work was dead-end, low-paying, far from their children, and without benefits (Schleiter and Statham 2002). The marriage initiative suggests one of poor women's problems is their lack of husbands, not opportunities. Thus, the message sent by the PRWORA is one of mistrust and degradation of poor women's life choices—a message made more tolerable to the public by the image of the welfare queen.

World Bank's project to increase single mothers' employment in Tajikistan focused not on finding women any job placement available, but on the creation of microcredit institutions and local women's community centers where poor single mothers could receive the education and skills they need to start their own businesses (World Bank n.d., 8). This was in keeping with the dominant policy trend by international institutions; in 2000, when the United Nations instituted the Millennium Goals on global poverty, the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment was included as one of the eight goals (United Nations n.d.).

Similarly, U.S. Secretaries of State Condoleezza Rice and Hillary Rodham Clinton have emphasized women's rights and empowerment in developing countries as a key component of U.S. foreign policy efforts to combat global poverty (Brand 2008; Landler 2009). The Obama administration recently created a new post of ambassador for Global Women's Issues to focus U.S. foreign

❖❖❖ *U.S. policy evinces skepticism that U.S. women could be affected by the same kinds of oppressive economic and cultural forces that keep women in poverty in the developing world.*

U.S. foreign policy and international development policy, on the other hand, have sent a completely different message about the impoverished Third World woman. Development policy has been enthusiastic about supporting women's rights and increasing their educational, economic, and political opportunities (Coleman 2004, 82). For example, the

policy efforts on the "political, economic, and social empowerment of women" (U.S. Department of State n.d.). In 2003, Congress specifically invested \$10 million to empower Iraqi women by implementing leadership, political advocacy, and media training programs (Coleman 2004, 92). And in 2009, Senator Dick Durbin

proposed the Global Resources and Opportunities for Women to Thrive Act (GROWTH Act) to increase funding for programs in developing countries that “ensure that the policies of the United States actively promote development and economic opportunities for women” (GROWTH Act 2009).

At the core of these foreign and international policies is a belief in what Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn call the “girl effect,” that is, the idea that *if only* women in developing countries had more opportunities, protections, and rights, they could better protect themselves and their children from poverty (Kristof and WuDunn 2009). This suggests optimism that, with the right support, poor women can be transformative actors, changing and improving their own lives as well as those of their children and communities. That message finds no counterpart in U.S. welfare laws; instead, U.S. policy evinces skepticism that U.S. women could be affected by the same kinds of oppressive economic and cultural forces that keep women in poverty in the developing world. This denies the potential of America’s poor women to become the strong advocates and leaders of their communities that their sisters in developing countries are believed to be.

Exposing the dichotomy between foreign and domestic policy approaches suggests that U.S. welfare policy has been stunted by the confines of the harmful image of the welfare queen. By enacting welfare policies that seek to punish poor women’s behavior, the United States loses out on the positive effects of women’s empowerment that are already accepted and highlighted by the United States as sound policy abroad.

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Half the Sky Only Half the Picture: A Review of *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*

by Nicholas D. Kristof
and Sheryl WuDunn
(Knopf, 2009)

Reviewed by Masum Momaya

Masum brings together her skills and experience as a researcher, educator, and social justice advocate to link theory and practice. She has served recently as curator for the International Museum of Women and writes a weekly column for the Association for Women's Rights in Development. Momaya has an honors bachelor's degree from Stanford University in public policy and feminist studies as well as a master's degree in education and a doctorate in human development, both from Harvard University.

Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn's *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* has raised both delight and disdain from those working for women's rights and gender equality worldwide. Advocates have been quick to celebrate a mass-market book that brings attention to

issues faced by women in the Global South ("the South"), including sex trafficking, gender-based violence, and maternal mortality. Yet, there is an often-underestimated flip side to the ways in which awareness is raised, namely the telling of tragic stories from the South mitigated by the heroics from the Global North ("the North").

Half the Sky makes the case for investing in women, arguing that educating women not only empowers them but also alleviates poverty and promotes economic development. The idea of "investing in women" is not new but finds fertile soil amidst the current global economic crisis, in which policy makers are eager for cost-effective solutions. Few would dispute that investing in women is a good thing.

Yet the inadvertent secondary effects of positioning women primarily or only as economic actors have gone unexplored, and in re-invoking this discourse, Kristof and WuDunn may inadvertently further instrumentalize and racialize the very women that they seek to emancipate.

Half the Sky positions women from the South as the selfless solution to the world's economic ills. Citing research that women spend earnings on food, water, shelter, school fees, and medical needs for their families rather than on personal needs or leisure, the authors *valorize women's selflessness*. This places unreasonable and unequal expectations on women and lets everyone else, including men and governments, off the hook for their part in perpetuating violence and inequality. In most cases, when women enter paid employment, they still end up having to shoulder all domestic duties—and now they are responsible for eradicating poverty and fixing the global economic crisis, too?

Half the Sky also touts microfinance as a panacea for poverty. For example, in

the story of Saima, a Pakistani woman who suffered domestic abuse until she started her own business with the help of a microloan, Kristof and WuDunn do not discuss the socioeconomic and political conditions in Pakistan and the foreign intervention that underpin poverty and violence. While few dispute that micro-credit brings about financial inclusion, without larger structural reform and cultural changes, it's not enough to eliminate violence or sustainably eradicate poverty. Moreover, sometimes microfinance can

“West” to intervene when the reverse—citizens of the Global South protesting Northern power structures—would be met with outrage? The authors placate their readers with proclamations that “in reality, Americans and Europeans are usually treated hospitably in the developing world” (88) and that “western women are often exempt from local indignities and harassment” (89). Duh. This is true only because of the power imbalances that the authors do not acknowledge in the first place. Moreover, this type of soothing

❖❖❖ *Kristof and WuDunn may inadvertently further instrumentalize and racialize the very women that they seek to emancipate.*

be an exploitative tool, especially as commercial banks see that women make very good borrowers who faithfully repay and take out more loans to pay basic expenses when they cannot generate adequate income. Presenting microfinance as a solution in isolation of larger structures or policy decisions is a limited and irresponsible way of encouraging activism.

Additionally, the stories used to make the case for “investing in women” have racist and sexualized undertones that perpetuate stereotypes about men in the Global South, suggesting that gender injustices only happen there. This kind of reductionism leaves no room to question Northern development and philanthropy and their inherently racial architecture. Also, it obscures more subtle forms of day-to-day discrimination experienced by women, which are difficult to uproot or overturn.

Finally, given these North-South power dynamics, why is it that Kristof and WuDunn encourage those in the

reductionism is reminiscent of the same justifications for colonialism, in which imperial interventions are legitimized as a means of “saving” native women from their savage, sexually voracious men. In this instance, one form of aggression (colonization) is justified in trying to curb another (sexual).

Overall, while *Half the Sky* may serve to bring attention to and mobilize resources for women in the Global South, its framework has ideological and practical undertones that merit closer inspection and could potentially contribute to the very discrimination and exploitation the authors seek to eliminate.

Half the Sky Coauthor Nicholas Kristof Responds

Prepared by Paige Austin



Nicholas Kristof is a New York Times columnist, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, and well-known advocate for human rights and gender equality around the world. Along with his wife Sheryl WuDunn, Kristof is the author of *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*.

Women's Policy Journal of Harvard editor Paige Austin is a first-year master in public policy candidate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. In January 2010, she interviewed Nicholas Kristof to get his response to some of the questions raised by authors in this volume of the WPJH.

WPJH

As an author and a columnist for the New York Times, you have such an impor-

tant platform in terms of raising the profile of issues around oppression of women. How do you reconcile your role as someone who tells stories of that oppression with your desire to give the women you describe agency?

KRISTOF

It worked out well to have a man and a woman write *Half the Sky* together because women's rights have to be a common enterprise. If women are the only people complaining when women are raped or abused, then the movement has already lost. After all, the Holocaust wasn't just a Jewish problem, segregation wasn't a concern only of Blacks, and mass rape and lethal discrimination aren't just a "women's problem."

WPJH

In the book, you and your wife Sheryl advocate a movement as broad and transformative as abolitionism or the American civil rights movement to stop global exploitation of women. If funding and support for that movement flow from the United States and Europe to the developing world, does that perpetuate a power imbalance between the Global North and South? How can that be avoided?

KRISTOF

One of the examples we give in the book is of the amazing Sakena Yacoobi, who is fighting to educate girls in Afghanistan. It would be absurd to refuse to help Sakena in the name of noninterference on the grounds of power relations. The way to empower poor countries, and marginalized peoples, isn't to focus on charts about power relationships. It's to help Sakena educate Afghan girls.

...❖ *It would be absurd to refuse to help Sakena in the name of noninterference on the grounds of power relations.*

WPJH

How do some of the local solutions highlighted in the book, like microcredit and education, relate to broader structural change on a national and international level? Can microcredit make a dent if on a global level many of the economic and political policies perpetuating poverty in the Global South remain unchanged?

KRISTOF

There's no one solution, and we also need international efforts to improve trade rules, finance vaccines, and the like. But grassroots education and empowerment efforts absolutely can make a dent. That's how foot binding ended in China, for example. One of the mistakes my generation of student activists made was that we sought to adopt the "Grand Solution"; in retrospect, we would have accomplished more if we had tried to chip away at problems bit by bit.

WPJH

One of our writers in this issue of the WPJH makes the point that the idea of a "girl effect," which you highlight internationally, does not carry the same resonance inside the United States, where donors and policy makers often see poor women as "welfare queens" rather than potential change agents. Do you see this bifurcation between domestic and international development philosophies, and if so, how do you account for it?

KRISTOF

I think there's generally more skepticism about overcoming domestic poverty than about overcoming foreign poverty. To me, the common thread is education; the best tool to fight poverty whether in Burundi or in the Bronx is improved education. It's a disgrace that America's neediest kids get the worst schools, and liberals who normally push antipoverty programs haven't confronted the education component because they historically have been close to the teachers' unions that constitute part of the problem.

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