

Women, Gender, Development



Also in this issue:

Women and Workplace Insecurity
Involving Men in the Gender Perspective
ISS Collaborations in Research and Teaching

DevISSues

DevelopmentISSues

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From the Editorial Board

With this edition of DevISSues, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the MA specialisation in Women, Gender, Development (WGD) at ISS. Doris Hilber (WGD class of 2007) reminds us that gender is not all about women in her thought piece on masculinities. Anurekha Chari (a recent graduate of our Gender and Economic Policy Analysis diploma course) provides a fresh look at how employment generation programmes could reduce poverty among women, and one of our new lecturers, Sally Roever, illustrates the problem of workplace insecurity for women in the informal sector. Amrita Chhachhi and ThanhDam Truong reflect on the history of the WGD teaching at ISS and the evolution of gender studies more generally. We also provide you with a taste of new ISS publications on gender issues: a report on gender and the PRS process by Geske Dijkstra and the Development and Change special issue on "Gender Myths and Feminist Fables".

The teaching and research news in this issue is all about partnerships. We highlight our MA programme in Suriname as one example of ISS degree programmes that are taught abroad in collaboration with partner institutions. On the research side, Kees Biekart and ISS Rector Louk de la Rive Box discuss research collaborations with two Dutch institutions – Woord en Daad and Hivos – that support both faculty and student research.

Let's not forget that the WGD anniversary is not the only anniversary at ISS this year. The ISS itself is celebrating its 55th year of existence! This event will be celebrated during the week of 15 October, with a myriad of activities on the theme of "Citizenship: Cities of Despair, Cities of Hope?".

The Editorial Board

ISS 55th Anniversary

Addressing citizenship: "cities of despair, cities of hope?"

The ISS 55th Anniversary, celebrated in the week of October 15-20, will address the new problems – and hopes – of the increasing portion of the world's population that chooses a life in the urban environment. We will be hosting a two-day conference with international and ISS specialists, a full-day public debate and an honorary doctorate awarding for Dr Bina Agarwal and Sir Richard Jolly. Alongside our academic programmes, every day this week will provide a number of entertaining cultural events and activities; international fusion cooking classes, African drum training, a theatre piece, and much more. And last but not least, to remind you that ISS is still young at 55, the week will be closed in great festivity. So with this week ISS throwing its doors open even wider, please keep track of latest events at www.iss.nl/55anniversary.

Subscription

If you are moving house, receiving too many DevISSues copies, or want to stop your subscription, please email Marie-Louise Gambon at gambon@iss.nl

About the cover

The photograph was taken in Lima, Peru, in March 2002. The photographer, James Lerager, made a photographic documentation while Dr Sally Roever was conducting research (see article on page 16). This woman was selling plasticized shopping bags in the Gamarra garment district of Lima. For more of James Lerager's work, visit the website www.webphotoessay.com



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Women, Gender, Development: teaching gender in the context of globalization

An interview with Thanh-Dam Truong

The Women, Gender, Development specialisation is in its 25th anniversary this year. Associate Professor Thanh-Dam Truong, who has been part of the WGD team since 1984, shares her views on the place of women and gender in the studies of development and globalisation. Discourses on women and gender remain shaped and delimited by institutions and governance systems within which they are deployed. Some systems are more permeable and responsive to new ideas emerging from research findings and interactions with society than others. Changes require much deeper intra- and inter-gender dialogue than currently exists.

Could you talk a little bit about your own background?

My first encounter with ISS was when attending the ISS Diploma programme in International Relations and Development in 1977. Following this I pursued my Doctoral education at the University of Amsterdam, with the thesis on "Sex, Money and Morality: prostitution and tourism in South-East Asia." It was a topic that wasn't very much researched at the time. But it became visible because causes of sex trafficking from South-East Asia to the Netherlands had surfaced, particularly through women's shelters set up to support those suffering from domestic violence. Oftentimes shelters had to deal with cases of women entering the country through marriage and finding themselves in prostitution. Resisting this work would lead to domestic violence. Working with women caught in these situations made me more aware of the broader structure and the linkages between prostitution, tourism and sex trafficking and how these three aspects are integral to structures in international political economy. The narratives of women in shelters played a strong role in sharpening my mind as a researcher. I realized that human rights for women cannot be considered outside of political economy, and that legal norms regulating women's identity were gendered and sexualized. In my thesis I discovered how sexual identity interacts

with labour relations and management systems in the tourism sector. In sex tourism market forces are stronger than the law. While the subject-material itself is fascinating – because I see what sex plus money can do to society – it is also tragic because all around us we see the rise in sexualised and monetized

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cultures countered by conservative forces without a third space, a grey zone in which different forms of existence can be negotiated.

I joined the Women and Development Programme as a staff member in 1984 while I was writing my dissertation. The Vienna conference in 1994 was a major catalyst for women's rights, especially by placing it in a broader context of

class, ethnicity, and indigenous identity. Different women's rights platforms have since tried to connect civil political with socio-economic, cultural and group rights. Several WGD staff members attended the Beijing Conference, met with alumni and brought new initiatives and perspectives to bear in the teaching and research activities of the Programme. Rising interests in globalisation and structural reforms and global governance have meant the rethinking of the key concepts we use, such as gender, feminism, family, gender division of labour, gender identities, as these have acquired new dimensions unknown before.

How did gender as a topic emerge at ISS?

The area of women and development first came to ISS when a senior colleague Ms. Mia Berden (now retired) attended the NGO Forum of the Mexico Women's Conference in 1975. Upon her return she proposed that an institute of development studies like ISS should provide the space for women's activists in developing countries to share and reflect on their experiences, to discuss and propose alternative options and visions of development. This was followed by a 3-month workshop organised by the ISS, attended by representatives of women's organisations in the South. The workshop proposed to ISS to establish

women and development as a study area, which started as two optional courses in 1978, and evolved into an MA in 1982. It was an academic programme driven by activist interests.

Maria Mies, one of the original teachers, opted for patriarchy over gender, both of which were major schools of thought during the '80s. In providing a historical understanding of women's subordination, patriarchy sought to explain its reproduction and historical transformation. Gender as a concept is an invention of Anglo-Saxon feminist scholars who see subordination of women as being culturally and historically specific, something too complex to be captured by patriarchy as a tool of analysis.

Robert Cornell's work in the late '80s had a major influence, offering a perspective of 'patriarchy' which is more nuanced, providing the concepts of gender order and gender regime which can be used in different places and sites. It gave valuable insights into how people engage with the State and how their interests are actualised. Gender as a value-system is inscribed in state institutions and social relations, and reflects how people live by and act out such values, resist or try to change them. To me this is an interesting interplay of power, that can change structures gradually and over a long period.

During the '90s the concept of 'gender' became the preferred concept since it brought in the active role of men. At ISS discussions on how to rename 'Women and Development' were held on many occasions, to signal to the public that we work with gender theories and do not exclude men. Our initial hesitation to change the name to Gender and Development – as many institutions had done – was based on the desire to remain focussed on our main target group of women, and prevent repeated marginalization. The importance up to this day is that the invention of gender and feminism came from the grassroots and it engages with science, society and state; keeping this engagement alive is valuable.

How is gender understood in international institutes?

The World Bank is moving to show its gender sensitivity, but one whereby they uphold their neo-liberal position. In the



Thanh-Dam Truong

World Bank approach to engendering development, the language of good governance is used: gender equality is a good thing, as it becomes equated with economic growth. In other words, the intrinsic value of the principle of gender equality is less emphasized than its extrinsic value (say to economic growth or efficient resource management). Notwithstanding the importance of the

The importance up to this day is that the invention of gender and feminism came from the grassroots

intrinsic value of gender equality as a principle, I am more sceptical about the claims made regarding its external value. For instance, Japan's miracle of growth was built on the principle of gender inequality observable at all levels of the society, persisting throughout the '60s to '80s. But

the Japanese government has only addressed gender equality issues since the '90s though, since facing an aging population and low fertility rates which began to threaten its competitiveness.

Other institutions address gender equality differently. Studies about gender mainstreaming in the EU show that this principle is negotiated and renegotiated at many levels. While using a single template to convey the meaning of gender has met with much resistance, it is more difficult to retain this diversity of meaning when engaging with bureaucracy. The danger of gender-mainstreaming can thus result in a too simplistic formulation; while the process itself is important, those that are promoting it must be more engaged with different meanings of gender generated by social experiences. Gender mainstreaming as 'planning' and 'regulating' gender has been a rigid exercise that demands new thinking rather than just regurgitating the existing material. The first step is always to look at what meanings are



Dalit women carries a red cross at a 2006 human-rights conference in Chitrakoot. Ami Vitale / Panos pictures

assigned to 'gender' in certain norms and conventions; what is included and what is excluded? Can there be more flexible interpretations that reflect rapidly changing relations?

Can you mention areas you're more critical, and more positive, of in gender studies?

A new perspective where I've seen most innovation is gender and human geography; it is a good supplement to the traditional perspective given by political economy. In this field you divide the world into different blocs, such as nation and region, while in human geography you work with notions that cut through these blocs. Understanding gender through analytical approaches offered by human geography combines issues of spatial boundaries, gender, culture and economies in very creative ways.

More critically, there is a great inability for departments specialising in gender and development studies to keep up with the changing role of the university in the globalization process. Institutions of learning have succumbed to the logic of the markets, and in many ways this undermines the collective principle of many women and gender studies departments. There's a tension between the media that delivers marketable knowledge, and universities that exist as a space for knowledge creation for social transformation. An example

of marketing is that, in public spaces, women have to acquire more masculine features, while at home women have to go back to the feminine role, as mother. This involves accepting different identities depending on where you are. Having the awareness to adopt different identities is a privilege, although it's very frustrating as you become aware of how a perceived identity can box you in and prevent you from being the person you feel you are.

After WGD's existence for 25 years, how do you see the future of gender at ISS?

Looking at current literature, the future of gender in academia is still rather uncertain. We can't rely on the momentum of the world women's conferences and support in the last three decades. 10 years after Beijing in 1995 there has been no such conference since. So after 25 years of WGD existence, the role of alumni have become extremely important, as it is through them we have built such a broad network of researchers throughout the world. They remain essential, since the strength of building an academic base for the women, gender and development as a field still comes from collaborative activities in teaching and research in other parts of the world. We partner with the University of the West Indies, the University of Namibia, the Women's University in Sudan, and currently a

project in Bangladesh. Although the programme has reached its 25th year, the programme's direction can still be said to be quite open.

Any final remarks?

I would like to see more men engaging in gender studies. Not because they have to be more gender sensitive, but so that they see how the issues concern them as well. People like Amartya Sen and Robert Cornell contribute greatly to the debate, because they don't do it merely as a political gesture. It's an engagement that requires interest from the younger generation. This would help keep the field alive in the coming years. In fieldwork people are very aware of gender, because they live with it, but if you have a debate with them about it, they stop with the division between men and women; they ignore their own gendered perspective.

The programme was initially taught by (among others) Maria Mies, Kumari Jayawardena, Veronica Benholm-Thompson, Geertke Lycklama, Ben White, Wicky Meynen, Aurora Carreon, Renee Pittin, Saskia Wieringa, Amrita Chhachhi, Loes Keyzers, and Thanh-Dam Truong. Other colleagues joined later in the 1990s: Amina Mama, Ineke van Halsema, Maitreyi Krisnaraj, Ruth Pearson, and from 2000; Christine Sylvester, Brigitte Holzner, Dubravka Zarkov and Nahda Shehada.

Thanh-Dam Truong is an associate professor of Women, Gender, Development at ISS. She can be reached at truong@iss.nl

ISS News

Development & Change special issue on Gender

The 2007 special edition of Development & Change is titled "Gender Myths and Feminist Fables: The Struggle for Interpretive Power in Gender and Development." This collection brings together papers from leading feminist thinkers, examining the struggles for interpretive power which underlie international development. In tracing the ways in which language and images of development are related to practice, the various contributions provide a nuanced account of the politics of knowledge production. The authors interrogate the implications of this for feminist engagement with development, arguing that struggles for interpretive power are not only important for their own sake, but also for the implications they have for women's lives worldwide. This edition is edited by Andrea Cornwall, Elizabeth Harrison and Ann Whitehead.

ISS alumni students are eligible for large discounts for subscribing to Development & Change; by subscribing now you will receive all issues of 2007, including this special edition on gender! Through the Development & Change cover on the ISS website you can find out more about subscriptions and prices.

Upcoming alumni meetings

Throughout the year ISS organises informal meetings with its alumni in several countries. Recent alumni meetings have taken place in Bolivia and Suriname. Upcoming alumni events are scheduled for:

Tanzania (Dar es Salaam), 7 July 2007 with professor Mohamed Salih
USA (New York), September 2007, with Dr Des Gasper
Indonesia, October 2007, with professor Ben White

More meetings will be held throughout this year. Please check the alumni pages of the ISS website or contact Sandra Nijhof at the Alumni Office at alumni@iss.nl

Focuss.eu: special web resources for development cooperation

If you're frustrated when searching online to only finding non relevant and low quality websites, try www.focuss.eu and experience the difference. Focuss.eu is an ISS initiative that enables radically enhanced search results for those in the development field. Supported by over 20 institutes active in the development arena, librarians and

information professionals of these institutes evaluate and select electronic resources relevant for their audience. In addition individual researchers and professional development workers bookmark high quality e-resources which you can now tap into through the focuss search engine. Geoff Barnard (Head of Information at the Institute of Development Studies (Brighton): "Focuss.eu is a unique resource for researchers. It combines the power of Google with the experience of some of Europe's leading development research institutes in selecting the most relevant web content."

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Staff Changes

New academic staff are Jeff Handmaker, lecturer in Human Rights and Governance, Sally Roeover, lecturer in Governance & Democracy, and Women, Gender, Development, and Admasu Shiferaw, lecturer in Economics of Development and previously PhD student at ISS. Academic staff that moved on are Phillip Verwimp, who is now co-directing an EU funded research project in Households and Conflict; Richard Robison, who is now Emeritus Professor at Murdoch University, Australia, in the Asia Research Centre; and Jun Borrás, who holds the position of Canada Research Chair in International Development Studies at St Mary's University of Halifax. Bart van der Mark, former head of the Financial Office, retired as of May 1st.

Rectification

The news section in the last DevISSues referred to a printed picture with Dr Des Gasper; the picture was in fact made during his attendance to an ISS alumni meeting held in Kampala, Uganda, that attracted 30 alumni and Fellowship Office from the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

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Teaching News

A Concern With Governance: Collaborative MA in Suriname Wil Hout

The ISS as a teaching and research institute based in The Hague, has built a considerable global network of partner institutes over the years. This not only enables our academic staff to remain engaged in fieldwork, but also allows for an open flow of knowledge exchange. The first batch of students recently graduated from the collaborative MA programme with the F.H.R. Lim A Po Institute for Social Studies ('FHR') in Paramaribo, Surinam.

DIPLOMA PROGRAMME EMERGES

In 2002 Hans Lim A Po, the energetic director of the FHR and the director of studies, Ollye Chin a Sen, paid their first visit to the ISS to discuss potential collaboration. In the same year a second meeting took place for ISS counterparts during the Lustrum week that celebrated the ISS fiftieth anniversary. A few months later, in January 2003 the part-time postgraduate diploma course in International Relations and Development kicked off for a group of approximately thirty people from the public and private sector in Suriname.

The diploma course had been organised at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paramaribo in 2001, to improve the knowledge and skills of Ministry staff in International Relations. The Lim A Po Institute turned to ISS to benefit from the specialized knowledge that we could provide, which was unavailable within the country. FHR has demonstrated that it is possible to organise local training initiatives that upgrade the skills and knowledge of the country's public and private sector professionals. The Institute's programmes are a very useful complement to the undergraduate courses offered by Suriname's single university. Moreover in a country of only half a million people a collaborative training facility such as this can have a major impact.

In 2003 and 2004, the diploma course went through two cycles. Around sixty students obtained their diploma in International Relations in the part-time programme. Various ISS staff members taught, including Howard Nicholas, Karin Arts, James Busuttil, Richard Robison and Mansoob Murshed, as well as former ISS lecturers Surya Subedi and Jessica Byron.

FROM DIPLOMA TO FULL MA PROGRAMME

During the second cycle of the diploma programme, the idea was launched to transform the diploma course into a full degree programme. Inspired by the experience of the MBA programme, taught by the Maastricht School of Manage-

Alongside the MA programme set up with FHR, ISS also works with other institutes on MA and diploma programmes. Until 2003 ISS worked in Vietnam with the National Economics University in Hanoi and the University of Economics in Ho Chi Minh City. The purpose was to assist these universities in the transition from teaching central planning economics to market economics. The project took the form of a joint English-language Master's in Development Economics degree (MDE). With the success of this programme, the two partner universities continued with the "Vietnam-Netherlands MDE programme". The ISS remains involved in the MDE and provides quality control, advice and teaching inputs. Over 400 students have graduated from these programmes.

Since 1999, ISS has supported an MA programme in Public Policy Administration with the University of Namibia, from which 100 students have graduated. Again, the goal was to initially provide full support and gradually build greater independence of the MA programme within the partnering university, which as of this year has become fully autonomous.

ment for people from the Surinamese private sector, a plan for the development of a Masters in Public Administration (MPA) in Governance was developed. The objective of the MPA programme is to upgrade the skills and knowledge on governance issues of staff of ministries and state-owned enterprises. The focus on governance was a reflection of several trends. First, the interest in the working of democratic political systems produced a focus on accountability, anti-corruption mechanisms and the rule of law. Next to this, the programme responded to the general trend in international development circles to see good governance as a factor contributing to economic performance.

A natural alliance - Hans Lim A Po



"The organization of the Program capitalizes on the complementarities of FHR and ISS: A local initiative fuelled by a commitment to make a difference in the development of the country and fused with the experience and high standards of a Dutch development Institute. Value generation by this alliance is a new and successful formula for development cooperation, which we - at FHR - have embedded in the strategic mapping of our future."

Teaching News



Graduating students in ceremonial walk through Paramaribo after graduation.

The first MPA, again a part-time programme, started in March 2005 with thirty students.

The individual study projects, which represent the final phase of the MPA programme, train students in the writing of a policy-oriented paper. Usually based on and linked to the students' own working environment, the individual study project challenges students to apply concepts and approaches that were taught in the modules. Topics chosen by the first batch of students ranged from human rights issues to decentralisation, the role of indigenous and tribal people, activities of the Surinamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and policies for poverty reduction. In February 2007,

22 students received the MPA degree from ISS Rector, Louk de la Rive Box. The second batch of thirty students started the MPA programme in October 2006. The enthusiastic guidance given by Hans Lim A Po and Ollie Chin A Sen will surely produce a positive outcome and add some 25 to 30 graduates to ISS in the 56th year of its existence.

Wil Hout is Associate Professor of World Development and ISS Dean since January 2007. He can be reached at hout@iss.nl

For a full overview of ISS capacity development programmes, download the annual report from the ISS website.

First MPA graduates in Surinam - Louk de la Rive Box



"ISS is proud to join forces with the Lim A Po Institute in Paramaribo. We hope that the course can be further improved and reach students from other countries in the Caribbean region. Linkages could be made with the local MBA programme, done in conjunction with the Maastricht School of Management. Local staff and graduates will increasingly do research paper supervision. Yet thanks to the hard work by Staff from both institutes this MPA programme stands. To all who made it into a success a heart-felt: Thank You!"

Gender, Poverty, Livelihoods and Social Protection: Genealogy of a theme in Women, Gender, Development

Dr. Amrita Chhachhi

In 2007-08 a new multidisciplinary specialization on Poverty and Policy Analysis (PPA) will be launched at ISS, which includes the choice of a course on Gender, Poverty and Social Protection. What does a gendered perspective on poverty mean? Development literature and gender advocacy appeals are peppered with statements such as “feminisation of poverty”, “poverty has a woman’s face”, and “female headed households are the poorest of the poor”. Nevertheless, contemporary feminist analysts are raising uncomfortable questions about their use, implying they are often a substitute for an in depth gender analysis of poverty. These issues are discussed in the current Gender, Poverty and Social Protection course, which has been taught and revised many times since 1983 in the ISS MA specialization on Women, Gender, and Development. The course incorporates recent contentious debates as well as maintaining continuity in highlighting the main elements of a gendered approach to poverty, livelihoods and social protection.

CONTINUITY: GOOD OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES?

Over the last 25 years there is much that has remained in the Gender, Poverty, Livelihoods, and Social Protection course, particularly in terms of approach, perspective and key issues. The overall framing of the course is cast within an epistemological/ theoretical standpoint, based on the ‘view and voices from the kitchen table, below the glass ceiling and from the sticky floor’ – sites inhabited primarily by women rather than the male dominated corporate and international organisation board rooms. There is now a substantial body of mainstream development literature that has queried the money-metric notion of poverty using income/ consumption measures (as being technocratic and paternalistic based on data that is non-comparable, unreliable and rarely sex-disaggregated) and its claim to ‘objectivity’. The archaeology of poverty discourses shows how historically the definition of poverty is political, linked with the emergence of capitalism. The poor, constructed as a social problem, became an object of knowledge and management, resulting

in numerous disciplinary mechanisms to control and police this ‘unruly mass’. In contemporary times official poverty lines are often politically manipulated (consider for instance the global poverty number debate on the Poverty Net/ World Bank website).

However, the feminist critique of the conventional measurement and analysis of poverty and macro-economic policies based on this, goes further in

The archaeology of poverty discourses shows how historically the definition of poverty is political, linked with the emergence of capitalism

illustrating the boundaries of basing poverty assessment on the household as a unit. Opening up the ‘black box’ of the household and looking at intra-household power relations reveals

gender as well as generational variation in assets, vulnerability, violence, and the experience of poverty. If we apply this conceptualisation then the assessment of poverty changes dramatically- the poverty line that distinguishes between households can often cut through a household - with women poorer than men in terms of assets and access to resources. The clearest example of inequality in access to resources and intra household discrimination are the studies on millions of ‘missing women’ in China and parts of South Asia reflected in the unequal sex ratio.

A related issue that is addressed in the course is the invisible labour of (predominantly) women within the care economy i.e. cooking, cleaning, childcare, looking after the elderly and family members, and providing emotional support. This work is vital for the maintenance and reproduction of human beings (the UNDP estimates that globally women’s work is estimated to contribute \$11 trillion compared to a global GDP of \$23 trillion). A recent UNDP study shows that unpaid reproductive labour constitutes 66%



Women workers, Electronics industry, Demanding minimum wages and transport, Okhla Industrial Estate, India.

of women's work compared to 24-34% of men's work. This work is not recorded in national statistics or in the UN system of National Accounts, but it is often what prevents households from slipping into extreme poverty. Studies on economic restructuring have shown that privatization has led to the increase in women's labour time for domestic provisioning and the transfer of costs to the household. The implicit assumption of the 'infinite elasticity of women's time' as women's work (manual and emotional) expands to provide a cushioning effect in periods of austerity, and the ignoring of these hidden costs allows the continuation of risky neo-liberal restructuring policies. Rather than the 'feminisation of poverty' what seems to be occurring is a 'feminisation of responsibilities and obligations'.

Within this broad framework the "Gender, Poverty and Social Protection" course has continued its focus on key issues. The exploitative/ empowerment effects of women's employment in special economic zones and changes in women worker's subjectivities is even more relevant today with the increasing informalisation of labour and flexibility in the labour market. The global

commodity and care chain framework and corporate social responsibility is a recasting of the theme of home based production for export markets and the North/South dynamics of the process of housewifisation/ domestication and consumerism discussed in the first years of the course. The reconstitution and

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intersections of gender/class/ethnic identities and emergence of 'virtual' work identities in the new IT based call centres are linked to changes in intra-household bargaining and work and citizenship based entitlements. Poverty reduction strategies valorise micro-credit and we discuss anew the examples of Grameen Bank and SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association).

A range of social protection policies are explored from a gendered lens to address issues of redistribution as well as recognition - reorienting macro-economic policies, debating land rights for women to analysing the gender implications of local experiments such as basic income schemes, community currencies and collective action.

CHANGE: THE ARRIVAL OF 'GENDER' ON THE POLICY MAP

Since the '90s there has been a shift in development discourses and an increased concern with global poverty and awareness of gender reflected since the 1990 World Development Report onwards. The World Bank PRSP source book has a chapter on gender and its guidelines are supposed to be integrated in the regular country Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). A new conceptual approach to poverty as multidimensional has been mainstreamed particularly in the UNDP. The definition of poverty has been broadened to include vulnerability with a range of indicators to highlight the importance of processes and outcome and links between poverty; inequality;



Grandmother, mother and daughter in Guatemala. Adam Hinton / Panos pictures

democracy; and freedom - bringing to the fore the significance of both rights and entitlements.

The study on *Voices of the Poor* (D. Narayan et. al.) for instance brings out significant gender differences in perceptions and experiences of poverty. Women tended to define poverty as the lack of what is necessary for material and social well-being, which included not just food but also housing, land and other assets. There was an emphasis not just on the lack of bread, but rather lack of voice, rudeness, humiliation and broader issues of dignity. Importantly, they differed from the men's focus on increased income as the solution, demanding instead assets and improvement in basic infrastructure, which would lay the basis for more sustainable longer-term security. The advent of gender budgets is a powerful initiative to reallocate resources towards this broader vision of human security.

CONTINUING CHALLENGES AND NEW DIMENSIONS

Has this however happened in practice? An assessment of the way gender has been addressed in the country PPAs and PRSPs tells a different story. Even third

generation PRSPs continue to pigeon hole the discussion of women/gender into the education and health sections (the gender jewels in the policy crown now adorning the MDGs), with some discussion in the sections on labour markets (mainly micro-enterprises) and hardly any mention in the sections dealing with agriculture, land rights, rural development, environment and natural resource management, safety nets and food security, water supply, sanitation, violence or urban development, transport, and energy. Every year in the course we do a PRSP exercise applying a gender lens to the latest country PRSPs; participants found that apart from the ones produced by Vietnam and Ghana, where some of these aspects are dealt with, in most other PRSPs there continues to be a conceptual, statistical and strategic silence on the multidimensional and multi-sectoral aspects of gendered poverty.

The main problem is that most PRSPs use 'women' rather than gender as an analytical category with almost an exclusive focus on female-headed households on the assumption that they are the poorest. An important finding from recent feminist research

on 'trade-offs' is ignored - for instance a poor single mother may prefer to be poor rather than continue in an abusive marriage even if it provides her with economic security. Work on sex workers in Calcutta and Dhaka show that women enter sex work not just because of poverty but also to escape from violence from male relatives and patriarchal controls in rural areas. Poverty, and its relation to gender, is thus as much about "agency compromised by abuse, stress, fatigue, voicelessness, as it is about lack of resources".

Methodologically the nexus of knowledge construction and power remains in the PRSPs, with a dominance of the positivist approach and a legitimization of econometric techniques as the only 'scientific' evidence. Data from qualitative techniques is not integrated into analysis or policy recommendations, and crucially budget allocations, with a filtering out of gender and 'voices of the poor'. Despite country variations, standardized policy prescriptions are recommended, unquestioningly reinforcing the macro-economic model of neo-liberalism.

Many challenges remain. There is a continuing debate on the instrumentalist efficiency based argument for gender equality and poverty reduction (the main finding of the 2007 State of the World's Children UNICEF report is that there would be 13m fewer malnourished children in South Asia if women had an equal say in the family) versus the intrinsic right for women to develop their capabilities and choices and live a life with enough bread as well as roses. Other new areas of concern are the high rates of male unemployment and the 'crisis of masculinity'. The study of gender and poverty remains deeper and more multifaceted than a simple focus on 'women' and requires multi-level comprehensive policies for social transformation (see article by Doris Hilber on p15)

Dr Amrita Chhachhi is senior lecturer in the Women Gender and Development Program. She teaches the course Gender, Poverty, Livelihoods and Social Protection in the second semester, which is a core course of the MA specializations in Women, Gender, Development and Poverty Studies and Policy Analysis.

Revaluing the Women-Friendliness of Maharashtra's Employment Guarantee Scheme

Anurekha Chari

The Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), in Maharashtra, India, although not a women specific employment programme, is often hailed as such because of its many provisions sensitive to women. Fieldwork research conducted in 2002 found that the scheme did not stand up to this reputation. On the other hand, because of the legal nature of the EGS, it can allow for women's mobilizations to still demand those provisions.

The EGS was enacted in 1977, designed to provide 'guaranteed employment' in the State of Maharashtra. Aiming at increasing rural employment using local labour to build infrastructure, it targeted the male and female landless and agricultural labourers who fail to find work during the lean agricultural season and drought conditions. The right-to-work programme also had specific provisions that catered to the needs of women, including bringing EGS sites closer to their place of stay, crèche facilitation, shelter, provision for rest and sanitation facilities, maternity benefits, and most importantly; equal wages. Scholars consider the EGS programme gender-sensitive because it provides a survival strategy in the form of work with women-friendly provisions to women in otherwise precarious environmental conditions. This is reflected in employment figures where, at any one time, over 50% of the workers are women.

Results from my own research, in which I interviewed 130 women regarding

the EGS scheme, indicated that the programme is only sensitive to rural female wage labourers in its design. In practice, women did not have access to safe drinking water, did not receive equal wages, and were often not paid on time. Nor were they provided with sanitation and crèche facilities,

The EGS programme is only sensitive to rural female wage labourers in its design

shelter or first aid, and often received inedible grains under the food coupon scheme. Additionally, most of the women workers did not know that they could access and demand these provisions under the EGS Act. And without training, the unskilled female labour force remain heavily dependent on the scheme for employment and income - even after three decades of its existence. Thus the highly visible presence of women as labourers on EGS work sites may not always be an indicator of the gender sensitivity of the scheme.

Policy planners assert that once women are provided with minimum basic needs they can become empowered. Following this train of thought, Moser (1989: 1800-1804) distinguishes between two kinds of interests; practical and strategic. The EGS scheme in its design incorporates all the elements that Moser describes as practical needs, such as equal and timely wages, access to sanitation and drinking water facilities. But in pursuit of these practical needs, women and organizations may also mobilize to meet their strategic needs, such as challenging the sexual division of labour and questioning patriarchal dominance. Thus group organization around economic issues can often open the door for women to raise questions

about other aspects of their lives. This potential for mobilization is already reflected in a people's organization named 'Mukti Sangharash' in Maharashtra, wherein the organization raised specific concerns of 'deserted women' by mobilizing women workers at EGS work sites.

Mukti Sangharash – an acronym for exploited peasants, workers and toilers' liberation struggle – mobilized peasants and displaced industrial workers in Maharashtra in the early 1980s. For almost two years they organized demonstrations, morchas (march) and dharnas (sit-ins) in various areas of Sangli district, raising issues of corruption and demanding equal and timely wages for both sexes, as mandated by the EGS. In addition they also fought for a provision annulment, which employed husband and wife



Woman in Employment Guarantee Scheme / ANP

teams, thus discriminating against single women. Mukti Sanghrash held meetings with both women and men at EGS work sites and households, to raise women's awareness of the privileges due to them. Through such meetings they raised problems faced by single women abandoned by natal and marital families – known as *parityakta* (deserted women) – demanding a comprehensive support structure in the form of housing entitlements.

While the practical provision for women workers though the EGS has fallen short of expectations, the potential still remains to mobilize women to raise their practical and strategic needs. Because the programme guarantees work, organizations such as Mukti Sanghrash can more easily pressure the State to meet their demands. EGS thus provides a 'space' where organizing women around practical needs raises issues that are political by nature. It is

this aspect more than anything else that makes EGS 'women friendly'.

Anurekha Chari was invited to write this article as an alumnus of the 2004 "Universalising Socio-economic Security for the Poor" (USS) and the 2007 Gender and Economic Policy Analysis Diploma Programmes. She is currently a lecturer in the department of Sociology, University of Pune, Maharashtra in India. For full reference details please contact the author at anurekha@unipune.ernet.in.

Gender and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process in Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua

Geske Dijkstra

Taking account of unequal gender relations and promoting gender equality are important not only for addressing poverty among women more effectively, but also for the reduction of poverty in general. Have the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) processes in Bolivia, Honduras, and Nicaragua advanced gender equality and strengthened the women's movement? This is the subject of a 2006 report by Geske Dijkstra of Erasmus University Rotterdam as part of the ISS 5-year project to monitor and evaluate poverty reduction strategies in Latin America. The full report can be downloaded at www.iss.nl/prsp.

The original PRSPs in Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua, and the many national development plans that have succeeded them, generally present gender as a 'crosscutting issue', but the actual attention to gender in the poverty diagnoses and in the programmes and actions is limited. Bolivia is a partial exception to this, as the original PRSP did include several gender projects, but they have little relationship to other policies in the strategy, and no agency was made explicitly responsible for their execution. The lack of gendered statistics is generally said to be responsible for the absence of a gender focus in the poverty diagnoses of the PRSPs, but in these three countries this is not the full story; there was much more statistical information available than what has been used and presented in the strategies.

The influence of women's organisations during the consultation processes for the strategies in the three countries has also been limited. Moreover, even when women's groups did have an effect on the

outcome of the policy dialogues, this was not reflected in the final content of the strategies. These disappointing results are not unique to gender. The PRS consultations processes in general did not have much influence on the content of the strategies, and poverty diagnoses in the PRSPs not only lacked attention to gender inequalities but also to other inequalities (ethnic, income, etc.).

With respect to the empowerment of the women's movement, the experiences in the three countries are different. In Honduras and Nicaragua there was already an extensive women's movement, and the PRS process did little to strengthen it. In Bolivia, the various PRS-related consultation processes have contributed to strengthening the women's movement. Currently, the organisations of poor and indigenous women are represented in the government of Evo Morales, though their demands are not focused on specific women's rights or on reducing gender inequalities. The PRS processes have

indirectly influenced the implementation of gender policies, because they have stimulated the elaboration of sectoral and thematic plans on gender in all three countries (with donor support). However, although the implementation of these women and gender plans is formally the responsibility of the whole government, in practice it is left to the specialized women's institutions in the government, which only have limited budgets. In sum, any advances made in the last 6 years stem from efforts that were already under way before the PRS process, or from the separate gender equity plans developed after the PRSPs.

Geske Dijkstra is associate professor in economics, Programme of Public Administration, Erasmus University and member of the ISS research group currently led by Kristin Komives. The ISS research team annually produces a country report, one regional (comparative) report and one thematic report for each of the three countries. They are available in English and Spanish at www.iss.nl/prsp

Men are (to be) Involved: A postmodern view on the 'men's question'

Doris Hilber

Feminism if taken at face value refers to the feminine half of human beings. This was obvious in the first wave of the feminist movement which viewed women's oppression within the overarching concept of 'patriarchy'; a framework of analysis and action that has established a dichotomy between the oppressor and the oppressed and thus did not allow for any form of dialogue or collaboration with men. More recently however, debate has erupted around the so-called 'men's question' among feminists, dividing them between those who call for an integration of men into theorizing and political action, and those who remain focussed on only the woman's perspective, thereby opposing male integration. This article approaches this dichotomy from a theoretical perspective, using a post-modern understanding of the gender category which supersedes the binary of women and men, perceiving them exclusively in relation to each other.

RETHINKING GENDER CATEGORISATIONS

Theories of gender have only perceived women and men through their cultural construction, while a focus on gender relations signifies a step forward in bringing men and masculinity into the debate. Since there would be no category of women without men, including men and masculinity is not only useful, but inevitable. It also points to a growing awareness that equating gender with women was a harmful practice in both activism and many feminist writings.

It is not the aim of postmodern feminism to emphasise the categories of femininity in dissociation from masculinity, but to take both categories and the power relations that constitute them into account – summing them up into the term 'gender'. This category interconnects both women and men's issues, therefore including the family, the private and public sphere as well as the state as a whole. This is an important step since theories of patriarchy or oppression have analytical

shortcomings in not approaching the question of gender without taking men into account. In development studies, the shift from Women in Development

**To challenge the
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(WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) reflects the interest in analyzing not only power asymmetries between men and women, but among them as well.

MEN'S DIVERSE IDENTITIES

Mainstream development literature treats women and men as homogeneous groups, whereby women are categorised as victims and men are

viewed as abusers. This not only distorts social reality but also perpetuates stereotypical views of both genders. In such discourse, differences along the lines of class, race, sexuality and locality disappear in favour of a flat and analytically sterile approach.

Diverse masculinities are illustrated in a vivid example whereby black men were degraded by white men in former colonies and apartheid-countries. (Kandirikira, 2002: 133) While men are predominantly viewed as 'breadwinners', when they are unable to fulfil this role, they pay an emotional, economic and political price for their constructed masculinities which can easily turn into aggression towards women. (ibid: 119) As Silberschmidt (2001: 669) argues, "efforts to empower women may have unintended and negative consequences for women, unless they are balanced against efforts to deal with men's increasingly marginalized situation". Abstracting gender from social reality and ignoring the question of masculinities proves therefore to be inadequate.



Mikkel Ostergaard / Panos pictures

BEYOND COMPLEMENTARITIES

Feminist postmodernism goes a step further by acknowledging the differences that persist in society. It refers not only to integrating and making women visible, but also to rethinking the broader system, as proposed most radically by Queer theory. This approach doesn't challenge gender relations since it doesn't acknowledge any sexual binary or categorisation of 'men' and 'women'. It challenges the 'given' biological sex by taking into account other possibilities beyond 'women' and 'men', such as 'hermaphrodites'. (Jolly, 2000: 2-4) Taking men into account in feminism is therefore not a question of 'allowing' the opposite sex – against which the first wave of feminists raised their voices – into the debate, but about questioning the various oppressions of different groups. To challenge the hierarchical relations that have been constructed between men and women the system has to be revised at its core.

As Jolly points out, "we usually act out the socially prescribed and internalised roles assigned to us. We can act out variations on the prescribed performances, or re-enact the same roles with a new meaning" (ibid: 4).

Building this type of resistance, as Foucault would call it, requires a high level of agency for both women and men, enabling the opportunity to contest gender-bipolarities. But

while this post-structuralist theory is convincing in theoretical terms, it is not yet tenable in practice. It can raise awareness though of the absurdity of gender-based hierarchies. Development theory could gain a lot by adopting this reflexive perspective, and could be included in educational programmes,

Mainstream development literature treats women and men as homogeneous groups, whereby women are categorised as victims and men are viewed as abusers

gender training, or in alternative yet well-tried mediums such as the 'Theatre of Development'. (ibid: 5)

MEN, GET INVOLVED!

The question of integrating men is not one that has to be addressed by feminist theorists and practitioners (and thus predominantly women) only, but should also draw inspiration from male professionals. In this respect it is understandable that the feminist motivation and commitment to extend their outreach to men is not well perceived if "main(male)-stream

development experts" (Pearson, 2000) are not 'jumping on the boat'. Yet, much literature shows a growing interest among men to collaborate with gender-integrated approaches. Unlike the current GAD approach in which gender is often synonym to 'women', involving men and problematizing masculinities is a promising step towards positive social change. Postmodern feminism considers humans on every step on the ladder of social hierarchies and of every sex, age or class, by denying any validity of socially constructed binaries. Despite the complexity of social reality and the difficulty to apply postmodernism in development action, it is still promising to consider human beings, regardless of their position in the social hierarchy.

As forwarded by Harding, "if we find it difficult to imagine the day-to-day details of living in a world no longer structured by racism and classism, most of us do not even know how to start imagining a world in which gender difference, in its equation of masculinity with authority and value, no longer constrains the ways we think, feel and act" (Harding, 1986:19).

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Workplace Insecurity for Women in the Informal Economy

Sally Roever

One of the most profound transformations in the global economy over the past thirty years has been the increasing incorporation of women into the global workforce. New opportunities to pursue careers have enabled some women to enhance their command over household resources, take advantage of increased physical mobility, and develop their technical and entrepreneurial skills. Nonetheless, in the developing world, the majority of these activities take place within the informal economy, where women face a wide range of insecurities. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, 84% of non-agricultural women workers are informally employed (as compared to 63% of men); in Latin America 58% of women work informally (versus 48% of men); and in Asia, 65% of both women and men are informally employed. Despite the importance of the informal economy as an engine for employment and income generation, few countries have explicit national policies toward informal workers. This article discusses workplace insecurity in the informal workspace, focussing on street vendors, home-based workers, and informal employees of formal enterprises.

STREET VENDORS

Street vendors form one of the most visible segments of the urban informal economy in the developing world. They are generally defined as informal traders who sell goods or services outside of any enclosed premise or covered workspace. Some work in large concentrations, such as designated open-air markets, while others work in smaller concentrations or alone on street corners, medians, and sidewalks. Because vendors choose the location of their workplaces based on maximizing their client base, they often congregate in strategic commercial areas of the city, such as outside of bus terminals, railway stations, and formal shopping centres. Their workplace may consist of a mat or cloth spread on the ground, a small folding table, a wheeled push-cart, or a fixed kiosk or stall. Many countries lack a clearly defined and adequately enforced legal framework that protects vendors against expulsions from their workplaces. In Latin America for example, a country's constitution typically recognizes the citizen's right to work, but at the same time grants jurisdiction over the management of public space to municipal governments. Without specific, consistent, and enforceable legal provisions to resolve when and where vendors may occupy public space, local authorities can spontaneously evict vendors when the public comes to view

them as a nuisance. Local authorities may also confiscate vendors' merchandise, exacerbating economic hardship for those who have little to fall back on.

Establishing legal security in the workplace can be a priority over gaining access to credit for many street vendors. In a 2003 survey of street vendors in Lima, Peru, for example, 37% identified the threat of expulsion as their most important problem, versus only 3% who prioritized access to credit. Without some assurance that their workspace and merchandise would be protected, using credit to expand one's stock of merchandise or to purchase equipment or infrastructure might be excessively risky for these vendors. For women street vendors, who in many settings earn less than men on average, the threat of losing merchandise or access to clients is especially worrisome. Moreover, women who spend part of the day caring for children and tending to household work need assurance that their workspace is available and protected for the hours they can devote to street trade. For those who bring their children to work with them, physical security is also critical. Many street markets are inadequately protected from criminal activity, exposing vendors' children to physically and psychologically harmful environments

HOME-BASED WORKERS

Home-based workers are defined as those who carry out market work at home or in adjacent grounds, whether as self-employed entrepreneurs or as paid workers. Home-based work includes manufacturing and assembly, artisan production, personal services (laundry, dressmaking, shoe repair), clerical work, and professional work. At the global level, women far outnumber men among home-based workers, and women are also more likely than men to work at home in low-paid manual activities. Home-based workers typically have to absorb high production costs, such as purchasing and maintaining equipment, creating their own workspace inside the home, paying for utility costs, and buying inputs. Those who stitch garments, for example, must buy and maintain sewing machines, purchase oil and needles, and pay for electricity to light their workspace and run their machines.

Home-based workers are also subject to a number of workplace insecurities. Like street vendors who need a way to secure their merchandise, home-based workers must physically secure their equipment and raw materials against fire, flood, theft, and vandalism. They also need a secure and reliable infrastructure; steady electricity and water supplies, for example, are crucial

for home-based producers. For home-based workers who subcontract to larger firms, filling orders on time depends on having a secure and reliable physical infrastructure; without such security, these workers risk losing additional orders. Home-based workers are also exposed to physical dangers associated with manual work, including stitching and assembly.

A different kind of workplace insecurity also affects home-based workers in a way that does not affect street vendors in densely concentrated areas; because they work in their homes, these workers can be socially isolated from others who do similar kinds of work. While for example, street vending associations help mediate disputes with governments

hazardous situations; these include construction workers, head loaders (workers who carry materials on their heads from one part of a construction site to another), and waste pickers, for example. Though construction is conventionally understood as a 'male' occupation, women work in construction in certain countries; India is one well-known example. Garment workers who work without permanent contracts and without labour protections, such as those working in export processing zones, also face significant workplace insecurities, even though they are employed by formal firms. Women form around 70 to 80 % of garment workers in most countries where studies of the garment industry have been conducted.

around the clock to meet production deadlines. Many factories also lack basic workplace amenities, and employees do not have regular access to hygiene facilities. Employers of garment factories target young women as employees because they are perceived to have fewer family obligations than older women and more docile temperaments than men. Where young women are targeted as employees, a lack of security around the factory can make them targets of violent crime.

Finally, a lack of compliance with workplace safety regulations exposes garment workers to fatal accidents. In a one-week period in February 2006, three separate incidents related to workplace insecurity left hundreds of Bangladeshi garment workers dead or injured. In one case, locked exits prevented workers from escaping an electrical fire in a factory; in another, a five-story building collapsed after unauthorized renovations to convert its upper stories into a private hospital went wrong. Dozens of other incidents involving insufficient exits in case of fire have been reported in garment factories worldwide.



Girls selling clothes on streets of Lima, Peru / James Lerager

and other actors, home-based workers often lack such associations. As a result, they have very weak bargaining positions vis-à-vis intermediaries who place orders with them. Social isolation in the workplace has other disadvantages; for women whose mobility is already restricted by gender-based norms, engaging in home-based work may compound that isolation.

INFORMAL EMPLOYEES OF FORMAL ENTERPRISES

Workers who are employed by formally registered enterprises, but who work under informal conditions – for example, casual or day labourers and temporary or part-time workers without contracts – are considered informal workers according to the International Labour Organization's expanded conceptual framework for the informal economy. Many casual or day labourers work in physically

For casual labourers, typical workplace insecurities include physical strain (many report fatigue and chronic body-ache), high risks of injury, and a lack of basic workplace amenities such as bathrooms and drinking water. For women who work at construction sites, the physical strain is especially onerous, as they often must complete household chores which are also physically demanding once the workday is over. Casual labourers also can be dependent on multiple contractors to hire them, and unlike other types of workers, showing up at the workplace does not guarantee them any work at all.

Informal employees in large factories are exposed to different kinds of risks. The case of garment workers is one well-documented example; those working in factories subject to the just-in-time mode of production work intensively and

These examples of workplace insecurity among informal workers call for a renewed effort to consider the diversity of working conditions within the informal economy and a wider range of interventions to address workplace insecurities, particularly for women. Government policies that focus on the small and micro enterprise sector come closest to recognizing the existence of an informal economy, but these policies often only look to reduce bureaucratic barriers for entrepreneurs. This approach has little direct benefit for the poorest informal workers. As the informal economy continues to grow, governments must recognize the need to develop policies that enhance workplace security for informal workers. They should also recognize that contrary to the conventional wisdom of the industrial era, today's workforce is becoming more informal, not less. Moreover, as women continue to absorb the costs of market-oriented macroeconomic policy disproportionately, it is crucial to offer them support to establish more secure workplaces.

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ISS and its Partners:

Greater than the sum of its parts

One of the strengths of ISS is the practical and academic knowledge reaped through its broad network of partner organisations and institutes. With those it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), ISS and the partner organisation have each identified the value of working together for the greater benefit of both. ISS recently signed a MoU with Woord & Daad (literally translated as Word and Deed), a Dutch Christian NGO working to promote education, jobs and incomes in over twenty countries. In the first article below Louk de la Rive Box, ISS rector, sits down with Jan Lock, director of Woord & Daad, to discuss what they think the mutual benefits will be. In the second article (following page) Kees Biekart, senior lecturer at ISS, explains why, after two years of ISS working with Hivos – one of the larger Dutch donor NGOs – we will be expanding our relationship with them.

Jan Lock poses questions to Louk Box

What do you see as the value-added in this relationship?

The value-added is: coming closer to the private sector, as W&D work with the private sector on NGO-private initiatives. This has proven difficult to do for people that work in international development. The smaller a business, the more difficult it is to network with them. If we wanted to work with larger firms we could approach multinationals or large national firms, ones who are capital-intensive. W&D, on the other hand, work with smaller firms. That's important for us because mainstream development studies generally work at a distance from the private sector. In the history of development studies, there are taboo areas; there's involvement with the informal economic sector, but not so much with small and medium enterprises. Or with culture, but not religion. We do involve these aspects, but to push them into popular debate is another matter. So an organisation that's involved in the areas of both religion and private enterprise is, for me and the institute, a very valuable asset. Without these angles of understanding, much of the development debate becomes sterile.

What are the minimum standards that this MoU has to meet to fulfil the interests of ISS?

First a clear focus, and thus a clear direction, that supports our core goals in PhDs and Masters' training, as well as research possibilities for the academic staff. Second, there needs to be clarity on the avenues to reach these goals. The team that connects the two organisations is usually small, so each person should be complementary to one another to ensure the success of the project as a whole. Third, monetary support always helps a project move forward and become more concrete; it helps define what the value-added is of the MoU. So, in the specific case of our MoU; if we get 3 students from ISS who have worked collaboratively with W&D, of which one would produce something inspiring and original, I'd be happy.

Similarly, if our lecturers are exposed to new case studies that reflect the changing times - ISS being an institute that frequently bridges the practical and theoretical - this would be a similar value-added outcome of the relationship for us. Finally, in the next four years our financial support structure will change radically, where a lot more funding must come from research. I see possible funding coming from research funds aimed at the small and medium enterprise sector. Our MoU can be very helpful with this.

Louk Box poses questions to Jan Lock

How does Woord & Daad pair up firms, considering scale perceptions often differ between poorer and richer countries on what defines Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs)?

We have a number of methods; first that we don't adopt a blueprint method of understanding what an SME should be, but rather begin with the specific localized context we're in. Localized patterns of thinking about a business can vary a lot, and so we try to adapt to those. Second, we really exist as intermediaries between the Northern and Southern private sector; this implies that we try and find compatible businesses and mindsets that will bridge the gap. Experience has taught us that working with project teams at a distance has a greater success, and we prefer to remain on the sidelines once that relationship has been established, unless extra support is necessary. For example, we're supporting potato-farming projects in Ethiopia; we work at both the business level as well as higher up the product chain. In this project it has been important to not apply a blueprint form of SMEs, but rather work with the local understanding of an enterprise.

ISS is radically changing its financial structure in the next few years. Can you see a relationship where we look for research funding together?

As an NGO we're naturally inclined to work collaboratively in areas such

as finding funding. This of course depends on our experience of working together, which so far have been very positive. But the main synergy here is finding a crossroads between the NGO and academic sector, where there's a

mutual interest that can evolve from research; our strength is in finding appropriate case studies, while yours is support through academic research. Academic research, practical knowledge and lobbying have since recently played key interlinked roles, and so in that perspective there's real value to working together. At the beginning you mentioned the value of bringing religion into development, which is one of our niche areas. We'd be interested in supporting financial investment in this area. Ton Diets (professor at the University of Amsterdam) has done some research that shows when values such as respect and trust are imbued in collaborative projects, it results in much more positive results than otherwise. We'd very much support developing these type of alternative methodologies.

At ISS Professor Bert Helmsing and Dr Peter Knorringa, both economists, are responsible for this MoU. They can be contacted at helmsing@iss.nl and knorringa@iss.nl.

An English description of Woord & Daad's activities can be found at <http://www.woordendaad.nl/Page/nctrue/sp261/index.html>



Louk Box (left) and Jan Lock shake hands. Standing from left, Peter Knorringa, Wouter Ryneveld, Bert Helmsing

Knowledge Sharing with Hivos on Civil Society-Building Expanded

Four ISS students successfully completed their MA thesis in late 2006 as part of the civil society-building programme with Hivos, one of the larger Dutch private development aid agencies. One of the successful students wrote to us recently that the Hivos internship had been crucial in getting a new job with a local NGO in South Africa. The programme with Hivos will be expanded in the coming years according to Kees Biekart, who co-ordinates the programme for ISS.

Can you tell us what this knowledge sharing network is about?

In 2004 the Dutch donor agency Hivos approached ISS asking whether we were interested in developing a mutual knowledge sharing network on one of their key strategic priorities; supporting civil society-building activities via their Southern partner organizations.

Through Hivos ISS can gain direct access to a network of over 800 partner organizations with a donor agency that has shown great innovation in its civil society building strategies. As a research institute we are very interested in this rich and often unexplored practice. This initiative is partially supported through an internship programme for ISS MA

students. It has also stimulated a diverse variety of spontaneous ties between the staff of both organizations. This is important for ISS, as it benefits from an active interaction with the Dutch development community; and in turn Hivos now better understands what our abilities are as a knowledge producing centre.

Has this collaboration also been beneficial for our students?

Together with Ria Brouwers (ISS senior lecturer in International Development Policy) we started an internship programme in which MA students can do research for their master thesis by focusing on one or more Hivos partner organizations. The advantage is obvious; the students get direct access to key development experiences plus a financial contribution to cover the costs of their field work. In return Hivos and their partners receive the benefits of a closely supervised research output at low cost.

The value of such experience can go a long way; last year we had one South African student who wanted to do her research in another country, so she applied for the possibility to do a research internship with a Hivos partner in Tanzania. Her report was excellent, and she wrote me a few weeks ago that this experience with the Hivos internship had been instrumental in getting a new job with a South African NGO. She said the insights she had gained during the internship and the research process were precisely what was required as a basis for this particular job as an NGO programme officer. It is great to hear these types of stories, as this is actually what we hoped the partnership would

support; preparation for our MA students to further develop their professional career in their home country.

What has been achieved and learnt so far?

In these initial two years we have concentrated on setting up the infrastructure, such as a website (www.civilsocietybuilding.net), internships, contacts, and focusing our research activities. Several international conferences and workshops were organized, most recently in April 2007, on NGO accountability. With such initiatives we have laid the foundations for developing an inspiring international network.

Both ISS and Hivos realize that we are both organizations with a very different internal culture, which in the past sometimes generated misunderstandings. For example, Hivos is under more pressure to show concrete results of its activities in the short term, whereas ISS generates a longer term type of output, such as research reports. Hivos is also more practical in the use of its outputs; I think it helps us as an institute, to be told that our output is not only meant for the small academic circles but is very worthwhile also for the wider development community.

What are the plans for the coming period?

ISS and Hivos recently evaluated the first two years of our partnership and concluded that there was great mutual interest in expanding this over the next few years. Hivos is investing more in knowledge sharing activities and has used the pilot experience with us to set up three additional programmes with other knowledge centres. For ISS the extended programme is really attractive to invest in a longer term research collaboration with Hivos and its partners. This offers exciting new perspectives; for example, we will enlarge our team with Alan Fowler, one of the leading international scholars on NGO-related issues. He will be appointed as an ISS Affiliate Professor on Civil Society and Development, which means that we can count on his valuable inputs. We are also incorporating several new staff members, and we will even be able to create some PhD positions exclusively in the area of civil society building.

Dr Kees Biekart is a senior lecturer in Political Sociology at ISS. He can be reached at biekart@iss.nl. Hivos's English website can be found at <http://www.hivos.nl/english>.



One of the debates held at the NGO Accountability conference

Development and Change

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SPECIAL ISSUE

Gender Myths and Feminist Fables:
The Struggle for Interpretive Power in Gender and Development

Guest Editors:

Andrea Cornwall, Elizabeth Harrison and Ann Whitehead

Andrea Cornwall,
Elizabeth Harrison
and Ann Whitehead

Gender Myths and Feminist Fables: The Struggle
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