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December, 1999. Volume 20 (2). Office of Women in International Development. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

RESEARCH NOTES

Issues in Methodology: Action-Oriented, Participatory Research or Academic Research by Dr. Faranak Miraftab

What I would like to share with you here is the dilemma that one finds between the commitment to the empowering dimension of Action Research and Participatory Research, and the academic or scholarly interest one has for solid and coherent outcome that can lead to comparative information. In the mid-1990s, I was asked by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements' Gender and Habitat Program to develop a guideline for participatory research on gender gaps in low-income communities. The study was published as a manual, *Women's Empowerment: Participation in Shelter Strategies at the Community Level in Urban Informal Settlements* (UNCHS, 1996); it is designed to "...help field teams in different countries implement a baseline survey methodology in order to pinpoint the concrete situation of women vis-à-vis men within communities. The study aims... to assess the conditions of women as compared to men in various aspects of life including housing, services, income, education, child-rearing, decision making and use of time" (p.3).

The process of this research is as important as its results. Knowledge is power. Therefore, the manual outlined a project process that was designed to demystify research by assuring that information is gathered and analyzed with participation of community women themselves, instead of outside researchers who may treat the communities as sources of raw material and leave the communities with the precious knowledge collected in those settings.

The manual was published in four languages, and the participatory research methods described in it were implemented in 16 low-income communities in Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Colombia, Costa Rica, and Sri Lanka. In 1999, the same program at the UNCHS asked me to review the results of the country reports and draw conclusions about the project's overall outcome.

My involvement in these studies has presented challenges to my commitment to action and social change

More on Issues on Methodology on page 4

FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Alternative Ways to Power: Women Organizing for International Development by Dr. Irene Tinker (Abridged)

Since the mid-1960s, a myriad of women's groups have organized to change the laws and practices in their countries to improve women's lives. Women's groups are not new. For example, where market women exist, they have organized savings associations for enterprise use or for family



Provost Richard Herman, introducing Professor Irene Tinker

emergencies; in rural areas, women often formed groups for planting and harvesting of rice or corn. What is new, is affecting policy over the broad range of women's lives, by organizations throughout the world which in their turn help organize women in villages and urban areas. Most of the significant changes in women's rights and opportunities over the past three decades are the result of these multi-tier efforts.

The culmination of these efforts is a new type of social movement, one that seeks to transform the basic values of the dominant political paradigm. The emergence of a global women's movement as a social movement is documented by scholars around the world, men as well as

More on Tinker on page 5

WID ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Gender Roles in International Development (HDFS 388/WS 380) will be offered again this coming Spring semester. This course, taught by **Dr. Gale Summerfield**, will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00-10:20 am, 101 International Studies Building. It focuses on analysis of the gendered dimensions of economic transformation policies since the seventies. The impacts on people's lives and the strategies that women have adopted worldwide to improve conditions for themselves and for their families are addressed. This course is offered as part of the graduate concentration, Gender Roles in International Development.

The **Gender and Agribusiness (GAP)** research team completed the first stage of the USAID funded project. **Kate Cloud**, GAP Director, wrote the Cargill Zimbabwe Case Study focusing on women's employment in cotton ginning in Africa. The case will be used in Dr. Summerfield's spring course, HDFS 388/WS 380. The GAP team has also made a partnership with Cargill Thailand to look at their poultry production plant. The team is moving closer to a partnership with Quaker Oats Brazil to look at women's employment in cereal production. **Dale Silver**, Coordinator, provided a GAP Exhibit for a USAID "Gender and Results Workshop" to mission officers in Washington, DC on October 14, 1999 and also met with the USAID project officer. **Kate Cloud** participated in the National Council for Research on Women Annual Conference, "New Visions, Planning, and Practice: Women's and Girls' Leadership for the Next Century," December 9-11 at the United Nations in New York City.

WID Seminar Series: Coming this Spring, the WID Office will organize and sponsor a series of talks by visiting speakers and campus faculty focusing on contemporary issues faced by researchers in the women, gender and development field. Check the next issue for details.

Grant Opportunity for Graduate Students at UI — **Kathleen Cloud International Research Fund:** Beginning Spring 2000, the WID Office will be offering, on a competitive basis, partial dissertation grants for international research on gender issues. Applications, requirements and deadline dates will be available in the coming issue of this newsletter.

Vrinda Deva, WID Research Assistant and grad student in Labor and Industrial Relations, attended the YWCA's "I Speak Out" advocacy workshop, Oct. 29-30, 1999. Participants practiced techniques on how women can affect the political process by lobbying and becoming experts on the issues.

Jobs and Fellowships: for current listings, check our web site: <http://www.uiuc.edu/providers/ips/wid.html>

RECENT ACTIVITIES OF WID ASSOCIATES

Dr. Marianne Ferber, Professor Emerita of Economics, and **Dr. Dale Silver**, Coordinator of the GAP Project, attended the Illinois State University Conference, "Women's Employment: Linking Local and Global," September 17-18, 1999. Dr. Ferber presented a paper, "Contingent Work and Its Impact on Workers." Drawing upon recent work with Jane Waldfogel from Columbia University that focuses on the U.S., Dr. Ferber presented evidence that outcomes for various types of nonstandard workers -- such as temporaries, part-time workers, day laborers, on-call workers, independent contractors, and the self-employed -- differ considerably. In all, except the last two, wages tend to be lower, and in all of them, job duration tends to be considerably shorter, and workers receive far fewer benefits. Further, this is true not only for workers currently in nonstandard jobs, but these negative effects tend to persist even for workers who have moved into standard employment. While the subject has received far less attention in developing countries, it is likely that "contingent" employment there is even more widespread, if only because a large proportion of the labor force is found in agriculture and in agricultural industries, where employment is obviously seasonal. The presentation concluded with recommendations for policies that would mitigate the disadvantages of such jobs, without inhibiting both employers and employees from taking advantage of the flexibility nonstandard work offers.

Dr. Brenda Eheart, Director of Hope for the Children, gave a talk on "Changing the World One Step at a Time: Politics, Passion and Persistence" on November 10, 1999 as part of the Feminist Scholarship Series of the Women's Studies Program at the University of Illinois.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Gauri Bhattacharya, GRID departmental representative for Social Work, contributed the chapter, "Engaging Women/Mothers in Multicultural Community Organizing to Prevent Drug Abuse", in *Substance Abuse Prevention: A Multicultural Perspective*, (Kar, S.B., ed.), Baywood, NY 1999.

Dr. Winifred R. Poster, GRID departmental representative for Sociology, published "Globalization, Gender, and the Workplace: Women and Men in an American Multinational Corporation in India" in the *Journal of Developing Societies*, 1998, 14(1):40-65.

Dr. Beth Stafford, Librarian, WS/WID Library, contributed the chapter, "Information for People or for Profits", in *CyberFeminism: Connectivity, Critique and Creativity*, (Hawthorne, S. and Klein, R., eds.) Spinifex Press, 1999.

THE INTERNATIONAL AWID FORUM LEADING SOLUTIONS FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE Washington, D. C., November 11-14, 1999

Gale Summerfield: Although I don't attend a conference just to talk to other participants informally, I always find these talks a valuable part of the conference experience. That was especially true at AWID this year, partly because the conference is designed to bring together researchers, practitioners, and policy advocates to network and partly because there were relatively few panels. This year the panels were squeezed into two time slots at the end of the day (3:30 and 5:15). Also, it seemed that fewer panel



Photo of participants at AWID, left to right, Aida Orgocka, Vrinda Deva, Donna Fisher, Eleanor Allman, and Gale Summerfield; also attending but not pictured: Flora Makundi, Dale Silver, and Kate Cloud.

proposals were accepted and that more poster sessions were set up. I would like to see more panels available throughout the day because I think it is preferable to interact with presenters in a panel situation with lots of time for audience discussion; there were many interesting posters but the authors were generally not available for discussion. Several of our grad students at UI did poster sessions and I would have liked them to have had the opportunity for more interaction with people interested in their topics as occurs in panels. Still, I really enjoyed the panels I did attend and the trip to World Bank that AWID set up. Transparency of World Bank operations is always an issue, and AWID plays an important role in helping people learn more about this institution that has played such a controversial part in economic reforms around the globe. The panel I organized was "Property Rights as Human Rights." It went well with presentations by Eleanor Allman on Jamaica, Wendy Annecke on South Africa, Jean Pyle on Singapore, Consolata Kabonesa (presented by me) and my own work on housing in China, Vietnam, and Laos.



Jean Pyle and Gale Summerfield at the World Bank Site Visit

Eleanor Allman: I was privileged to give a presentation on the panel dealing with "Property Rights and Human Rights: Urban Women's Housing and Economic Strategies". My presentation was titled Entrepreneurship Education and Women in Development Concentration. It focused on a group of 45 Jamaican business women who had received credit from the National Development Foundation of Jamaica. When the women were faced with the problems of high rental for business location, some of the women used home properties to conduct their businesses. Unlike women in other traditional societies, Jamaican women surprisingly do not face discrimination in property ownerships. Some of the women acquired properties through marriage, inheritance and others through first-time ownership. Some individuals were able to own properties through a national program in Jamaica called the National Housing Trust, a government program. It started in the late seventies and it helps many people to own properties who would not have the opportunity of property ownership without such a program. Most of the women were successful because they were able to avoid high rental rates. Owning properties is a way of empowering women, and there should be more policies in place to help more women to own properties.

Vrinda Deva: This was the first time I participated and presented at AWID. I was struck with the mix of consultants/practitioners, researchers and NGO representatives participating in the forum. I shared my poster presentation entitled Powerlessness and Dependence in Gender-Structured Organizations with interested individuals. The poster explored different impacts of the alternative sources of income on women's status in the household in India. It depicted the pros and cons of women's employment in the formal sector versus women in self-employment. It discussed policies to provide women with credit, child support and health care benefits. This poster sets the stage for a study that I am conducting later this year of the relationship between the source of income and women's status in India.

Donna Fisher: The AWID conference was an interesting mix of academicians and practitioners, much different from other conferences which I have attended. The prevalence of consultants, especially at the session organization level put a much different twist on the dynamics of the meeting. I had the opportunity to participate in the World Bank visit. I found the small group interaction very useful in gaining insight into the inter-workings of one aspect of the Bank. However, I found the attitude of the high-level Bank officials to be both patronizing and dismissive towards participants in the visit. I made two excellent contacts, so overall the meeting was successful from my point of view.
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le trying to fulfill my academic passion for scholarship and comparative research. Typical quantitative methods do not work well in synthesizing the project results and making cross-sectional comparisons: explorations that our academic side can't do. I will first explain the current project's objectives and methods and then discuss the dilemma faced and the conclusions reached in the process of analyzing the data.

The Project: The project in 1999 drew on the 1996 study to examine the gender gaps in low-income communities, but the autonomy of local study teams was emphasized. The selection of questions and indicators relied on the interaction and dialogue between grassroots women and researchers in each country. In each of the participant communities a team was composed of four or five professionals, one local NGO and four or five women from the local community. The questions and indicators, as they appeared in the research guidelines, were to be taken as a departure point to be added to, omitted, or modified in the best interest of their local conditions and needs.

Post-project

Reflections: After the surveys were complete, the review of the reports from study teams in different countries revealed the project's contribution to the empowerment of women in the communities both through its process and outcome. The process of the study was found to benefit women in understanding their everyday lives in more analytical terms and earning self-confidence and belief in their

abilities. Some of the factors examined in the study, such as women's contribution to household income or tasks performed within the household, were found to have limited quantitative value and accuracy due to the sporadic nature of women's earnings and expenditures. But the reflective process was empowering. Responding to the survey questions in itself was found useful because it allowed women to reflect on their situation and recognize the extent of their contribution to household budget and household well-being. Furthermore, local study teams noted the potential of the collected information as an advocacy tool. For example, in Dodoma community in Tanzania, the community presented their preliminary findings to the local authorities as a basis for action, and demanded certain services, using their surveys to argue that the services were lacking. These services included access to resources such as potable water, education for their children, and skills in income-generating activities. The surveys demonstrated that 84% of their community did not have private water supply and that 77% of women had the task of fetching water to their homes; the survey results revealed more than 20% of community's households were headed

by women alone. In another case in Costa Rica, through the process of carrying out the study, a new women's group emerged and began carrying out capacity-building activities and workshops. In addition to the empowering role of the study's process, the project outcome was clearly appreciated by the study teams for its contribution toward construction of a data bank and creation of context-specific information that can be used for mobilization of numerous activities.

Although I was pleased to see the positive contributions of the participatory process in this research, I was initially troubled in trying to complete a comparative analysis of the country reports based on the collected data. First, the number of communities selected in each country and the sample size in each community was determined by the study teams in each country and community. Therefore, the case studies reflect a wide range of sample size, from as large as 1,270 households surveyed in three communities in Senegal to 100 households surveyed in one community in Zambia. This limits the representative ability of the data. Second, due to the central commitment of the project to its participatory nature and its emphasis on the autonomy of local study teams, the same information is not always available across communities. Survey questions may be omitted and added according to the specific needs of local conditions, or indicators may be defined differently across communities.

The unevenness of the information gathered across countries was what initially caused me an academic "hiccup" in the synthesis of the results. While I was content with the achievements of the participatory process and action-oriented nature of the study, I could not deny that the limitations I found in the comparative capacity of the research was a source of disappointment for me. I realized that my scholarly interests in conducting comparative quantitative analysis of gender gaps across regions were contradicting my activist interests.

While I am not generalizing this to academic accuracy and scholarly value of Participatory Action Research across the board, I recognize that for the purpose of comparative research, the participatory nature of the process inherently limits the accuracy of the outcome for cross-cultural quantitative analysis. In this case it was precisely the study's philosophy to drive from the decisions of the communities and groups in each country, rather than relying on series of unified measures and indicators that are imposed from above and applied at the community level. Thus, the limitation of the outcome is a cost that sometimes must be dearly paid, for the irreplaceable value of the empowering process. After all, research is not only about accuracy and outcome, but also about empowerment and process.



Faranak Miraftab is Assistant Professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is also departmental representative for the Gender Roles in International Development Concentration.

women. The editor of the *New Social Movements in the South* explains that while old social movements sought to transform or revolutionize the state, new ones build a countervailing force to the state. Further, the concerns of these new social movements go beyond the economic to issues of identity and meaning (Widnaraja, 1993). An eminent political Indian scientist, Rajini Kothari, argues that the influence of the women's movement, which proclaims that the political is personal, has caused "a massive shift not just in the position of women in politics, but also in our whole understanding of politics itself" (1993: 72). The following summary addresses two questions: (1) What does the increasing influence of the women's movement mean for women around the world? (2) Is this alternative way to power sufficient for women's equality?

What Does the Increasing Influence of the Global Women's Movement Mean for Women Around the World?

I want briefly to mention how women have organized around different activities. As NGOs and donor organizations put forward these various activities, they found that if they wanted to reach women, they had to organize women separately. If you go to India and talk to the community you talk to the old male leaders. So you have to divide; you have to find people. And as soon as you do that, as soon as women get organized, even if the particular activity is not terribly successful – if they form a group to make handicrafts but make no money on it — they still have a group. Once women are able to come out of their restrictive families and begin to find commonalities, they begin to work together. Often the results are unexpected, whether you are in Korea or in the slums of Ecuador or in an Indian village.

Economic activities comprise one of the alternative means of achieving power. As part of the process of setting priorities for economic development, women are still learning how to accomplish goals, and realize that their contribution to household income, or essential work, enhances their bargaining power. In Kenya, for example, one of the major economic activities women participate in is coffee production. Previously, women were given cash for their crops. When cooperatives were instituted, the official member that received the income was the landowner — the male. As a result, women reduced their labor on coffee to grow crops that produced income for school fees or food money for their families. Coffee production fell; export earnings fell. A compromise was made that the school fees were taken out of the payment for women's production of coffee before the rest was sent to the men. Different countries provide different examples of how women's economic activity comprises a way to achieving power. For the sake of illustration, they are categorized here under crafts & sewing, microcredit, and street foods.

Crafts and Sewing. For a long time, national and international women's groups have been organizing local women in an effort to help them earn money. While local handicraft seemed an obvious choice, the local market was often already saturated. The focus thus shifted to export

production. Similarly, efforts to introduce knitting and sewing to poor women required new customers. In Nepal, for example, women knitted wool sweaters with commendable design and marketed them to tourists, using local resources, but wool was not well processed so they began importing it from New Zealand; this made the practice much less profitable. This wasn't, then, the world's most successful marketing activity, but the women were organized and they began to think of what else they could do. You can read horror stories about what doesn't work in development. What was happening, however, is that the women were organizing.

Microcredit/microfinance. Almost all of these lending organizations start with women's groups. Despite many problems, women can borrow small amounts of money without collateral. Usually these loans are at market rates. If you are living in a village in Bangladesh, the market rate may be 16% per year, but how much do you have to pay the local money-lender if you have to go to him? Conservatively, 40% a month! In Omnibad, SEWA provided loans for women who sold food on the street so that they would not have to pay the local money-lenders 100% interest per day. Just by getting lower interest on loans, the women could double their income. What you begin to see with much of the microfinance is that because the poor no longer have to go to usurious lenders, their income often goes up even if the enterprise is not the most exciting.

Problems of marketing, demand, quality control, design are all factors in the questionable record of these efforts, but perhaps the major problem is the fact that poor

women are more likely to be farmers or vendors who had never been taught the skills of sewing or the making of handicrafts.

Street Foods. In the street foods study that I organized when I was running the Equity Policy Center, we wanted to look at activities that were successful in making money for the poor. We found out that these street food vendors were not so poor. We found that most stayed in this work their whole lives. We found that in most countries,

outside those in Africa or with African cultural roots, this was a family enterprise – even in Islamic countries. The theoretical findings of the street foods project showed that many of the assumptions about the informal sector were wrong and that many assumptions about the role of the family in development were wrong; so the street foods project was not only an applied project. The project helped improve the food quality



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: Participation in Shelter Strategies at the Community Level in Urban Informal Settlements



Prepared by: Faranak Miraftab
Investigative research conducted by: Faranak Miraftab, Faranak Pournazeri
For the Strategic Housing Interventions Development Programme (SHIDP) at WID

and safety and increase income in many countries around the world and influenced FAO policies; the FAO now trains street foods vendors rather than aiding governments to abolish them. The vendors also formed organizations in many countries.



Irene Tinker's talk was attended by University of Illinois faculty and students

Human rights are women's rights. Women in their own organizations can feel more free to speak, and they can then begin to trust each other; whereas in most NGOs in any country, the majority of the heads of NGOs are male even though the majority of the workers are women. What has happened in the last ten years in these groups of women around the world which were mostly originally focused on economic activities is that they began to talk about other issues. The most singular issue was domestic violence.

This has led to what is now called often "women's rights are human rights" (since the 1993 Conference on Human Rights). What is happening when you say that a man no longer has the right — because he purchased the woman, he married her, he supports her, whatever — to beat her up because he is the man in the house, you are opening up the doors of the house to civil law. You are saying that if you kill someone in the house, it should be the same punishment as outside. This has then become one of the most important organizing issues in the last ten years.

Examples of problems are abundant. On August 2, 1999, the Upper House of the Pakistani Parliament rejected a resolution that would have condemned the practice of killing women in the name of family honor. Last year, in Pakistan, at least 286 women were killed for honor. Earlier this year the problem of honor killing was brought to international attention through the case of Samia Sarwar, who had been consistently beaten by her husband. While meeting with her lawyer to try to initiate divorce proceedings, Ms. Sarwar was murdered by a man hired by her own parents to kill her in order to protect their family honor. There's no penalty. In Recife, the poorest Northeastern area of Brazil, containing 30% of Brazilian population — some 46 million people — 50 murders occur each weekend, most of them related to domestic violence.

Another area that has come under this area of human

rights is the issue called post-conflict trauma. In Rwanda, for example, the genocide in 1994 created almost half a million widows. One of the problems is the widows who normally grow food for their families have rights to the land through the men, and nobody knows whether they continue to have rights to grow food because nobody knows where the men are.

Women's organizations have been set up there by local groups and international NGOs to help with education of the orphan children, to introduce microcredit, to provide food and clothing, to rehabilitate homes, to provide medical care for the rape survivors. The trauma is extensive. In 1994, women lobbied in front of the Criminal Tribunal, that is charging the leaders of the genocide, for a change in the classification of rape as a petty offense. It now been re-classified as among the most serious crimes. These are all legal points. It still takes a lot of activism to make anything happen. The Global Fund for Women has been a remarkable resource for activist groups. They support women's groups with usually about \$5000 with little oversight which makes a difference for small groups. (See Resources, p. 8)

Land issues are also critical not only in Rwanda but everywhere. With rapid transition, with killings, with migration, women are left as heads of households, and in many countries women cannot own property. So the point is essential that women and their children should have the house when the men leave --- not the men when the women leave. Women's organizations in many countries are beginning to change housing and land rights. The first group was COPAN in Costa Rica; it was instrumental in setting up new housing for those living in squatter areas. There was always a requirement of sweat equity. When these women began to move into the houses, the men began to reappear. Then the question was: Who owns the house? These women successfully lobbied Oscar Arias who was then president to pass a bill called the Real Equality Law. Under this law, if the house has had government subsidies, then it is registered to the woman and the man if they are married, and if they are not married, then it is registered in the woman's name. We should do that everywhere.

What we now see in the women's movement is a widespread understanding globally of the importance of changing women's rights: human rights and economic rights. This is the social movement that has created the new paradigm, and in many cases it exceeds and exists over the sovereignty of individual countries. It is fueled today by the Internet, by communications, by cable, by television. In sum, the women's organizations that focused on economic activities began to trust each other and look at their human rights and have changed the international climate.

Is this alternative way to power sufficient for women's equality?

The challenge for women in the new century is to continue to use the pressure and power of women's organizations but to find a way to also become a part of the official political organizations. In some countries, there are quotas and

here are lots of debates about these. In Russia there were quotas and everyone who was appointed by the quotas had to uphold the official party line. On the other hand, there are quotas now in the local government *panchayat* system in India, and the women's organizations of India are training the elected women NOT simply to speak for husbands who could not run. [Batliwala, 1997].

Power exists at all levels, at the bottom as well as at the top. The global women's movement is a fundamentally political movement. Its goals are easily understood; they are to help women in efforts to improve their lives. And while the use of gender is clearly a useful analytical tool on campus, you will never have a gender movement. The effectiveness of women is *women* organizing, and one should not undercut that by calling it something to do only with gender. The global women's movement as a new social movement has profoundly affected the global paradigm. The challenge for women in the

21st century is to reformulate the governance of states as effectively as the global women's movement has shifted our thinking and outlook about women.



Dr. Irene Tinker is Professor Emerita of Women's Studies and Urban and Regional Planning, University of California at Berkley. This piece is a summary of her talk given as part of CAS/MILLERCOMM 2000 lecture series at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on October 8, 1999.



SUPPORT THE GROWING FIELD OF WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT!

The Office of Women in International Development is seeking resources for the development of projects such as international student dissertation grants, policy-oriented research, and the establishment of historical archives. Your support will help us increase understanding of the gendered implications of on-going economic, political, and demographic change and will assist students in developing the analytical skills needed to address changing gender roles in research and public policy, as well as in daily life.

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