Practice Insights

Community Development and Women's Empowerment

International Women's Day

iACD

International Association for Community Development
Association Internationale de Développement et D'Action Communautaires

**WITHOUT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
THERE IS NO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

About IACD

IACD is the only global network for professional community development practitioners. We support development agencies and practitioners to build the capacity of communities to realisegreater social and economic equality, environmental protection and political democracy.

What do we do?

IACD links people to each other. We facilitate learning and practice exchange, both virtually and face-to-face. We work with partners to deliver regional, national and international events, study visits and conferences. We document the work that our members are doing around the world by collecting case studies, tools and materials on community development, and sharing these through our website, publications and ebulletins. We carry out research projects, drawing on international experience.

IACD aims to give its members a voice at the global level, advocating for community development principles and practice in international forums and consultations. IACD has consultative status with the UN and its agencies.

Contributing articles

Our international *Practice Insights* publications are issued three times a year, each one focusing on a particular theme of relevance to community development. If you would like further information or to contribute to future editions, please contact charlie.mcconnell@iacdglobal.org Alternatively, IACD members are welcome at any time to contribute news items, research, case studies or other materials to our members' Facebook site and to the IACD website.

Join us

For full details and to join, go to www.iacdglobal.org/join-us.
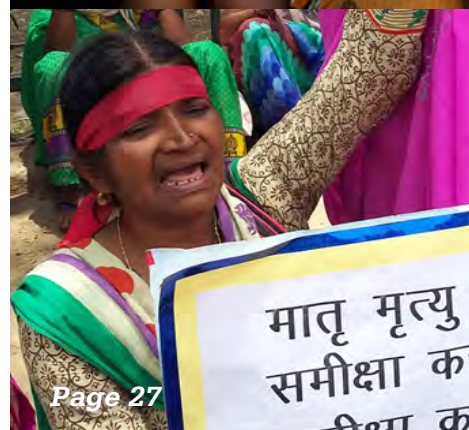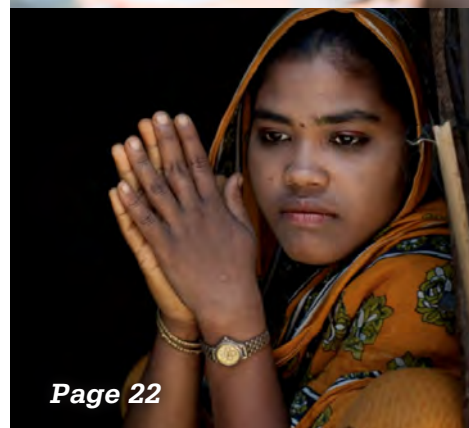
Benefits of membership include:

• Daily Facebook News posts about community and international development;

• Access to the Global Community Development Exchange resource bank on the IACD website;

• Opportunities to participate in Practice Exchange study visits;

• Discounted rates at IACD conferences;

• Discounted subscriptions to the Community Development Journal;

• Opportunities to share your work and experiences with a global audience, through our website, Facebook sites and other publications;

• Members also have the opportunity to nominate to serve on the IACD Board of Directors. Our next Annual General Meeting will take place in June 2020 in Kenya.

www.iacdglobal.org

Contents

Page 12

Page 20

Page 22

Page 27

Page 36

Editorial

IACD team would like to thank all contributors for your contributions for this special issue of Practice Insight featuring on Community development and Women's Empowerment for International Women's Day (March 8, 2020). As we celebrate the 25th year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) which provided a progressive blueprint for women's rights movements, your voices from the grassroots reflects the successes, as well as future challenges, for achieving the vision of a sustainable world with gender equality as the cornerstone.

2030 agenda for Sustainable Development objective of leaving no one behind would only be possible if gender equality "SDG Goal 5"is truly held to be integral to all the 17 SDGs. Gender Equality is a right and ensuring the rights of women and girls across all the SDGs will lay the foundations for a just and equitable society that works for all. At times, gender equity is essential to achieve gender equality.

Contributions from field practitioners, academicians, students and community leaders have all echoed the sentiment that while much has been achieved in the past, much more still remains to be done to change societal attitude of patriarchal supremacy which actually works as a stumbling block for inclusive development and growth in leadership roles.

The IACD is always dedicated to work towards the fulfillment of this critical SDG which is central to achieving inclusive growth and development for all specifically for women and girls because we all believe that without Women Leadership and Community Development there is no sustainable development around the world.

We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Dee Brooks our Regional Director for Oceania and Connie Loden Regional Director, North America for their valuable insights and inputs in putting together this issue.

Anita Paul

Maryam Ahmadian

IACD Directors
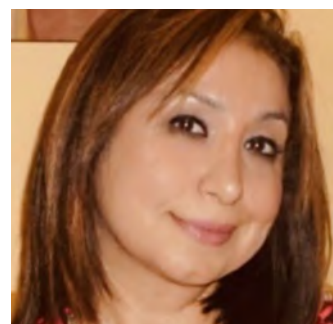
"Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage. And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight inside the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom."

Anais Nin

Anita Paul

Maryam Ahmadian

Find us on Facebook

We want to provide you with contemporary news and information about what is happening in the world of community development on a more regular basis. Since April 2016 we have been utilising our main Facebook Page much more, to post daily updates on events, resources and news. We have been covering news from Alaska to Mongolia, Hungary to Brazil, from the United Nations to the smallest grassroots community development agency. If you have not yet looked at the IACD Facebook Page, please do. **facebook.com/IACDglobal/**

Spinning Yarns in the Community

Chloe O'Malley

I grew up on a farm in the West coast of Ireland. I was blessed to grow up with Aunts and Uncles only a few years older than me, who were more like older brothers and sisters. This close relationship with family and neighbours also stretched to the community I live in, shaping who I am today. My village is so rural in fact we still don't even have a mobile phone signal in 2020! But we don't let this lack of external connection inhibit our personal connections through visiting, storytelling and no one would ever see you stuck for tea bags or fresh hen eggs!

As a young girl I had the pleasure and freedom to grow up in the safety and security of a rural, agricultural, maritime community. I'm the eldest of three daughters and being females never prevented us from running after sheep or bringing the turf home from the bog. I grew up in a family that didn't carry gender stereotypical roles, we all equally carried out household responsibilities and outdoor jobs on the farm. I am aware that todays society still assigns many stereotypes, but for the most part we can rejoice in a more equal society for women today than in the past. As a community development worker I recognise there are still lots of inequalities around the world. I will continue to carry a feminist approach in my work and focus our actions towards the 2030 agenda from the Sustainable Development Goals such as Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

> *We are talking about an Ireland that was heavily influenced by a dominating catholic church where divorce and contraceptives were illegal and you prosecuted by the state.*

The community I come from is a hive of activity with lots of voluntary hard work going on behind the scenes. Many projects and events have successfully happened over the years due to the voluntary work of like minded people coming together working for a common goal and creating a sense of pride in our community. Whether celebrating a sporting win with returning teams welcomed home to bonfires or when circumstances of a difficult tragedy, where traffic management to accommodate a funeral is needed, our community spirit of kindness and support always comes to the fore. The women in my own family have paved the way for me. My Grandmother was a feminist as she was one of the first women to wear trousers in her village. The parish priest saw my grandmother out digging potatoes in the garden while wearing trousers, and he passed comment to my great grandparents saying "I didn't know ye had another son!".

Those were the times that women wearing trousers was controversial and perhaps while women were expected to be the home makers and child bearers, they were somewhat an inferior gender. If we just take a minute to realise that women have only been able to vote in the last 100 years! In my great grandparents time only women aged 30 years with a university qualification could vote, then after 1922 all women and men aged over 21 years could vote. However women still were expected to "stay at home" after

> *In 1990 Mary Robinson was elected as the first ever female president of Ireland and in 1997 Mary McAlease was elected as her successor.*

marriage and not hold positions in industry or public service. We are talking about an Ireland that was heavily influenced by a dominating catholic church where divorce and contraceptives were illegal and you prosecuted by the state. In my community there are many "Cillíns" Irish word for unbaptised children's burial grounds. These are not near a church cemetery or sacred place but many are located in a corner of a field far away. If a child died in birth or shortly afterwards and hadn't been baptised it was not permitted to be buried with the family plot in a church recognised graveyard. Nor was the usual burial customs of an Irish Wake afforded to someone who died by suicide. The parents were not allowed to mourn their loss especially the mother who had to be "Churched" before being allowed back to usual weekly mass.

It was the early 1970s before women started to gain recognition against all that the catholic church and Irish State oppressed them for. One example of this community development work started

when a group of women established "The Irish Womens Liberation Movement". These women were mainly journalists who set about to change Irish laws that prevented them from having equal status to men. Many changes happened slowly as Irish Catholic Church officials still held power over influence in policy development. It was 1995 before a referendum on Divorce was held and 1996 before it was written in to the constitution. In 1990 Mary Robinson was elected as the first ever female president of Ireland and in 1997 Mary McAlease was elected as her successor. This was the first time in the world a female president succeed another female president! My Great Grandmother and Grandmother didn't let the restraints of the expected perceptions of society mould them in to conforming to tradition. They were pioneering of their time by using their intuition and determination to better themselves. My Great Grandmother, while staying at home rearing a family and working hard physically on the farm, used her creativity and skill to help set up the local ICA guild. The ICA (Irish Country Womens Association) was a movement for rural and urban women, where women could come together and improve their lives through education and shared co operation. Nationally the organisation has championed many changes, adult education, better living conditions by supporting the roll out of electricity to all homes in Ireland and travelling the country with a model of a traditional farm house Kitchen, showcasing running water and appliances that needed a plug but would revolutionise life for the household. They also helped lobby to make Irish the 25th recognised language in the E.U.

Locally my Great Grandmother was involved in setting up a cottage industry knitting Aran sweaters for supply to leading companies who had international demand. She would take raw sheep's wool and use her spinning wheel to make beautiful thread that could be used in knitting and crochet. She would then use natural methods of dying the wool like heathers or vegetable peels. My Grandmother also learned this skill and passed it down to my mother and myself. It was a traditional way of life that was necessary to make clothes for their families. They utilised any extra income to improve their communities in order to create better life conditions for the next generation.

I have grown up in a home where our women were celebrated for their

The ICA (Irish Country Womens Association) was a movement for rural and urban women, where women could come together and improve their lives.
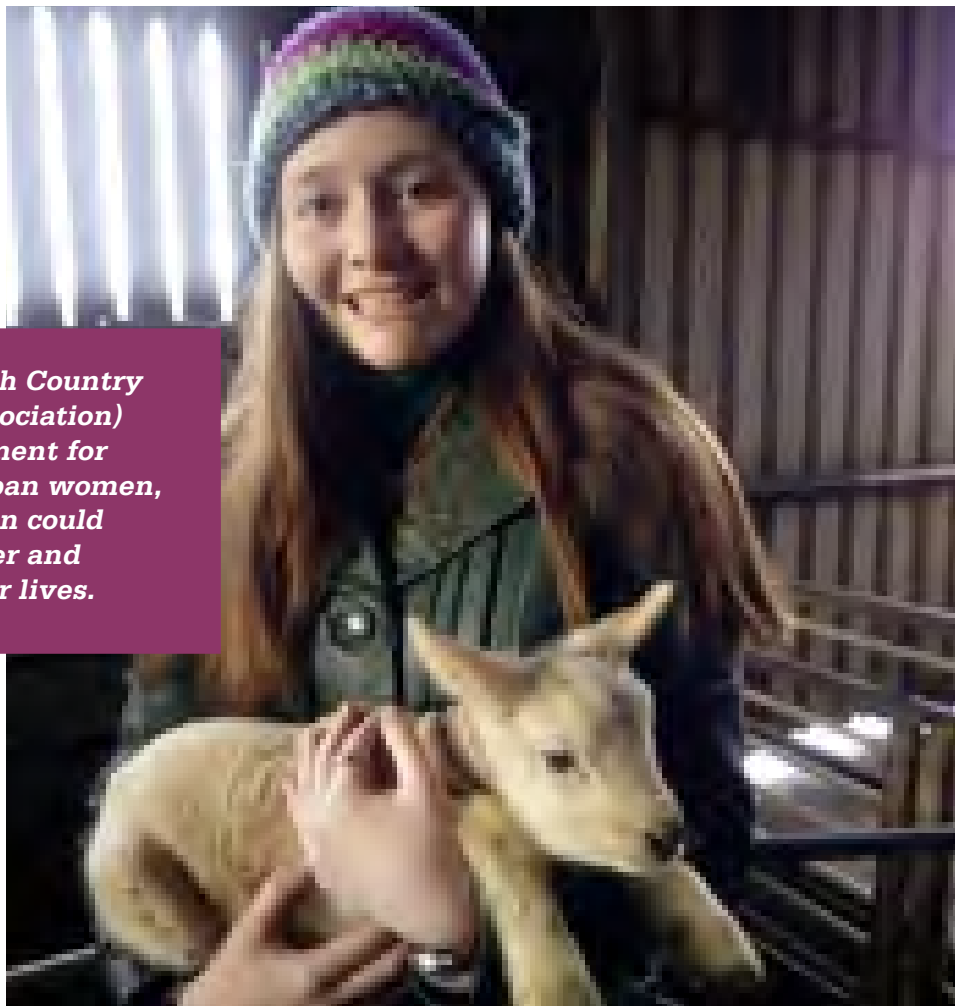
achievements. The men in our family have had a positive and supportive role in equalising the gender roles. My dad never shied away from changing babies nappies or making dinner. My Grandfather has always encouraged us and shared the responsibility of rearing the family with my Grandmother. It has shown me that equality can be achieved at a personal level. In my practice I use this framework to progress equality at collective level. I am studying Community and Youth work in Maynooth University My decision for this was greatly influenced by having a positive community experience of living the daily "ups and downs" of rural life. My community has shaped my longing for equality for all people, regardless of gender, income, ability or disability. It should not matter who you are or where you come from you should be able to live your best life.

I know the world I live in is a daily struggle for many women suffering from domestic abuse, coercion and unfortunately many countries impose strict regulations on women. But I do know that if we continue to fight for what we believe in it will eventually bring about change. My belief is that not just women are on a journey, but we as a society are constantly evolving and adapting to an ever changing environment. We can only go forward by looking backwards, Those who forget their past are destined to repeat it. We can take

inspiration and hope from the journeys by people in our own communities. My hope is to complete my degree in university 2020 and return to Mayo to positively contribute to people's lives. I believe our future is shaped by our life experiences. I know I have a lot to learn but I am confident that by even having this conversation about the journey of women we have came along way. We have the power to change our thoughts and take action to make our lives into something we can be proud of. As a young person and social media user I believe I have a duty to positively promote women and celebrate our achievements.

Special thank you to IACD for encouraging me to write a submission for International Women's Day. I would like to wish each and everyone of you reading this the very best of luck in your future endeavours. We stand in awe of all Mná! (Irish word for Women) Go raibh mile maith agat. (Thank you in Irish).

Chloe O'Malley is a 20 year old student from Mayo, Ireland. She is currently studying a BA Honours degree in Social Science Community and Youth Work in Maynooth University. Chloe is a Volunteer, Community Activist & Leader, Mentor & Motivator and a passionate young person positively making a difference in County Mayo and further afield the Killeen/Louisburgh area.

Dear Women in Community Development

Meredith Greta, Victoria Jupp Kina, and Holly Scheib.
Art by Maggie Hanley-Welles

This is an open love letter to you, the professional female working in community development, a field of social justice that has yet to find social justice in its own structures. The irony of being a professional in this field, experiencing the very oppressions that your chosen field seeks to eliminate, is exhausting. We know. This letter is to express our solidarity in your work and let you know that we see you – we see your exhaustion, your frustration, your isolation, and your pain. Here are some ways we see you…

We see you are leaders

• We see you making up 75% of the workforce. We see the data coming out of Scotland that shows female practitioners are disproportionately represented in lower paying jobs. We see 83% of you earning less than £35k per year while 72% of your male counterparts earn under that same threshold. We see you represented in the lowest paying managerial positions and your male colleagues filling 73% of senior management roles (Working with Scotland's Communities Report, 2018, 38-39). There is a lack of demographic analysis of community development practitioners outside of Europe, and we see that lack of information stifling discussions on gender disparity in the field.

We see you standing up, and we see the consequences

• Women in community development, we see you being willing to be seen, asking that your work be given the same respect as the work of male colleagues, only to be labelled as too fierce, too angry, too confrontational. We see you feeling isolated and stand with you.

Women's Work, 2018

• We see you boldly putting yourself out there for leadership opportunities in an organization within your field — and the director of your organization suggesting publicly that your decades of work isn't quite enough, and then turning to a junior male member to suggest his involvement in the same breath. We see you when your application for promotion is refused for not demonstrating the very leadership opportunities that were denied of you.

• We see you baffled when male colleagues who express outrage in private at the blatant sexism of your organisation do absolutely nothing to defend female colleagues in public

• We see you when you decide–bravely, but calmly and politely–to highlight how you experienced a male colleague's interaction with you as patronising or diminishing, only to then be cut out of further communication. We see your isolation and feel your anger.

We see that you are subjected to sexual threats, assaults, and harassment within your workspaces

• To our female colleagues who struggle as they see their male colleagues sexually assault, harass, and seduce young women and are protected by their institutions and colleagues, we see your pain. We see the choice you have to make: keep your job and keep quiet, speak up and be marginalized or terminated, or leave to keep your sanity.

• We see you propositioned by a colleague, and after refusing, being left out of meetings and communications.

Turn, 2016

• We see you struggling with the question of whether to meet your advisor/colleague/boss for a meeting at the pub/bar like he suggested. Will you be safe? Is this even okay? Do you have a choice?

We see your work policed

• We see you stressed in bewilderment over whether or not that terse email implies anger at something you've done. We see you wondering if you would be spoken to in this way if you were a man (spoiler alert: you wouldn't. We see that you already know this.) We see you collecting these messages and losing sleep over whether you should say something and worrying about how your words would be perceived.

• We see colleagues criticize political and social power, while operationalizing them within their institutions. We see the assumption that some work is "women's work" – and even though our male colleagues are quick to assure us that the term is offensive, it doesn't stop them from assuming "someone else" will be able to pick up those tasks. We see the assumption that you have the time to do the so-called menial work – cleaning up the coffee cups, showing a colleague how to reset his password again, and performing basic Google searches to answer the questions that arrive in a steady stream of emails.

• We see you swallowing your emotions, your nature, your pride. We see that you are trying your best to remain neutral, non-responsive, compliant, and working to keep your face eternally pleasant and friendly. We understand that this is always expected of professional women in this field and we are all exhausted by it.

We see your roles as mothers being used to marginalize and discredit you

• We see a field that works with those whose lives are characterized by childbearing, child-rearing, care-taking, and service-oriented work – yet insults, demeans, and disrespects the women within its scholarship who dare to have lives that include those same tasks.

• We see you when you are trying to meet the demands of your family while maintaining the professional roles required to ensure job security. We see you sat at your laptop while caring for your baby, or poorly child, or elderly parent, scared to let anyone see your exhaustion.

We see when your work and expertise are devalued and see how this limits our field

• We see the final reports, publications, conference presentations, and impact assessments that laud male supervisors and directors, while ignoring and minimizing the female contributions, expertise, connections, and skills behind those achievements.

• We see you holding your breath while your male colleagues present their analyses of the lives of

the marginalized and under privileged and accept praise as saviors and champions — while you are with your community partners holding babies, hanging posters, making beds, and cooking food with other women.

- We see you when your work is devalued, and your expertise denied. We see the energy that it takes to keep believing in your own expertise, to keep celebrating your achievements and to keep fighting for recognition.

- We see the gendered, hierarchical nature of science, knowledge, and information as systems that perpetuate colonialism, sexism, and white privilege – and we see how this limits our work and the efforts of our field.

- We see the racism and colonialism you experience while working in a field that purports to combat those forces.

- Indigenous women in community development, we see when male indigenous partners treat western female partners differently than their indigenous female partners. We see that western styles of work and scholarship marginalize and devalue matrilineal and female-centered systems of indigenous cultures. We see how our field perpetuates colonialism through unidentified privilege, white power, and sexism.

- Women of color in community development, we see our contributions further silenced through institutionalized racism within our field. We see the exhaustion that comes through the constant, but necessarily calm, explanation of structural invisibility to white colleagues who fail to see how they benefit from the very structures we should be trying to dismantle.

This short list reflects some of the ways we experience sexism and racism in our social justice field. We believe that our field can be better. We believe that talking directly about the power imbalances within our field will help us to be better. We believe that we can embed

social justice in the fabric of community development, so that we not only work for social justice, but we embody and practice social justice.

To that end, these are things that we dream about community development:

- We dream that women do not have to act like men in order to gain advancement and respect in the field of community development and women stop pitting women against each other.

- We dream of colleagues who, universally, seek not to gain power and authority over each other, but rather act to support and encourage for the greater good.

- We dream that all participants in this work – from janitors to tea makers to administrators to organizers to artists to caretakers to teachers to professors to directors – are treated as equals and each of us carries ourselves with great humility towards our fellow colleagues and peers.

- We dream of peers–men and women–who hear of the power hierarchical and gendered experiences of their colleagues and do not make it all about them by offering examples of how they have never experienced or participated in it, but instead sit, listen, validate, and strategize how we all can be better supportive of each other.

- We dream of a time when our experiences as women, and the knowledge of injustice that these experiences have enabled us to gain, are valued as fundamental to our practice.

- We dream of a new form of leadership. A leadership based on collaboration,

mutuality and respect. We dream of organisational cultures that value all voices and enable challenging dialogues to happen safely to enable individual and collective growth.

- We dream of a time when women feel confident in the structures around them so that they can name injustices without fear of retribution.

- We dream of a world where we are not afraid.

We invite other women to join us in imagining and dreaming how our field can work to address its power imbalances. Please share your stories of marginalization with us. Contact us to talk and share. We want women to feel supported and have opportunities to share their experiences. We believe that together, we can create a field that operates from a place of embedded social justice, and that this will make us all better. Our emails are below; we are eager to hear from you.

Meredith Greta has been the administrator for IACD since December 2018 and was the operations manager for WCDC2019. She has a background in accounting and finance and also works as a yoga teacher and volunteer bookkeeper. She can be contacted at membership@iacdglobal.org.

Victoria Jupp Kina, PhD FHEA MRes MA DipSW, has worked with marginalised communities as a practitioner and researcher for over 20 years. She is an interdisciplinary researcher and critical pedagogue with specialist knowledge of qualitative, applied and arts-based research methods. She was Academic Director of WCDC2019, is fluent in Portuguese and is Director of Social Research, ReImagined. She can be contacted at victoria@ socialresearchreimagined.com

Holly Scheib, PhD MPH MSW, has more than two decades of experience in public health, social work, human rights, development, disaster, and advocacy. Specializing in transformative practices that adapt scientific methodologies to fit the needs of communities, her work has reached more than 40 organizations across 5 continents. Dr. Scheib is President of Sage Consulting, Incorporated, and can be contacted at holly@sagecons.com

Maggie Hanley-Welles is a painter and community arts grant specialist for the U.S. State of New Mexico. See more of her passionate oil paintings on Instagram @maggie6846

Women Empowerment and Community Development

Martin Rasheed Musah

Bolgatanga municipality, colloquially known as BOLGA, is the capital town in the Upper East Region of Ghana. Historically Bolgatanga was situated at the southern terminus of the ancient trans-Saharan trade route. Along the route, handicrafts- especially straw baskets, hats, fans, leather goods and metal jewelry were exchanged for kola nuts and salts.

This municipality comprises eighteen communities that predominantly are noted for production of handicrafts products and agriculture activities. Majority of the artisans located in these communities are women and youth.

After graduating from senor high school, I applied to the district education unit to offer services as a community pupil teacher. During this period, I encountered a life changing experience through interactions with the family of a pupil. My pupil's mother wove a wonderful handicraft product popularly known as "Bolga Basket". She explained to me how sale of these baskets is helping her to raise income to support her family and send her son to school.

This interaction helped me in engaging myself with activities that would contribute to the development and empowerment of women and the community as a whole. To make this possible I initiated several systematic approaches which were

drawn from the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA). This approach seeks to find a way to improve the understanding of the participants in order to identify their potential strength and weaknesses that may have hindered progress of their communities.

The mother explained to me how this product is helping her raise income to support his family and to take his son to school. I passionately dedicated myself into a full-time activity as part of my contribution to the development and empowerment of these women and the community entirely.

This approach helped me to understand their vulnerability in terms of economic, political and technological environments along with unforeseen impacts due to natural calamities, seasonality and other economic parameters which may affect the ways in which all participants can collectively use their assets to achieve our goal of making this handicraft a reliable and sustainable industry.

Having put all this into consideration, I put together a strategic work plan which centered on educating participants in the community about this industry, its benefits to them as weavers and external benefits that it may accrue for the communities.

As a first step we decided to form associations along with the appointment of group leaders and simultaneously developed consensus on common prices for diverse baskets produced by each weaver. Secondly, all agreed to market their baskets jointly through their respective group leaders on a pre- determined price

which was agreed upon by all. We also tried to build in innovations and creativity in terms of designs of baskets produced.

Simultaneously, I tried to improve market access for these baskets within the country and abroad through the use of internet. I also tried to improve domestic markets by accessing tourism sites.

In the space of fifteen years I accumulated a vast experience and a full understanding of the intrinsic role women play in community development leading to sustainable development of their communities. My efforts led to the following impacts:

• Incomes generated contributed towards provision of food for their children and husbands.

• Handicraft activities of these groups enhanced their communications with the outside world.

Having put all this into consideration; I put together a strategic work plan, it begun with the advocacy activities which center on educating women in the community about this industry, its massive benefits to them as weavers and external benefits that it brings into the communities.

• Through the activities of these women collectives, diverse livelihood activities such as, agro- processing, youth entrepreneurial development, healthcare screening and rural enterprise development programs constantly take place in these communities.

• Community infrastructural development such as basic school expansion, borewell water system and other vital school amenities improved.

To conclude, I feel there is a strong bond between women's empowerment and community development thus, activities of women in the community are directly contributing to the development of their communities.

Martin Rasheed Musah, Bolgatanga-Upper East Region of Ghana. Attended TransAfrica University College and later developed the passion to be a social development and community worker to help bring about women and youth empowerment in rural communities in Bolgatanga municipality. Currently a final year student in community development at the local government institute of Rural Development College.

Empowering Grandmother Leaders to Support and Protect Girls:
an experience from Senegal

Judi Aubel

In the Global South, many programs promoting girls' rights and development narrowly focus on girls, assuming that if empowered they can instigate changes in harmful social norms affecting them, e.g. child marriage and boy-preference for education. In Senegal, many NGO and government programs to support girls illustrate this pattern. This linear approach, supported by concepts from behavioral psychology and epidemiology, fails to take into account the role and influence of other influential actors within family and community systems in which girls are embedded. Insights from the fields of community development and community psychology support the need for a systemic, or socio-ecological

(Trickett, 2009), approach to Girls' Holistic Development (GHD) particularly in collectivist cultures in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In these non-western, hierarchically structured cultures, elders have great authority regarding the socialization of adolescent girls, it is senior women, or grandmothers, who are key actors.

Most programs to promote GHD in non-western societies do not explicitly involve grandmothers, often viewing them as an obstacle and totally ignoring the existence of *natural grandmother leaders* (Riano, 1994), thereby overlooking an abundant community asset and source of social and cultural capital for promoting and protecting girls.

> *"Confidence builds power. Thanks to these training sessions I no longer feel any sense of hesitation with something needs to be said or done. I no longer bow my head when speaking before a group of men because I feel more confident".*
>
> *Grandmother Leader*

> *In these non-western, hierarchically structured cultures, elders have great authority regarding the socialization of adolescent girls.*

In Senegal, the NGO *Grandmother Project – Change through Culture* (GMP) identified natural grandmother leaders as an important yet underutilized resource for promoting GHD. GMP developed an innovative under-the-tree non-formal education training strategy to strengthen grandmother leaders' confidence, knowledge and collective capacity to promote positive change for girls. This strategy is part of a larger community program promoting GHD which: embodies an assets-based approach (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) building on existing culturally-designated roles and values; promotes inclusive intergenerational dialogue between elders, adults and adolescents of both sexes to strengthen community cohesion; and catalyzes community-wide reflection on priority issues for action to promote GHD. A key component of the program is community leadership development.

The under-the-tree *grandmother leadership training strategy* was conducted in 20 rural and urban communities with 230 illiterate grandmother leaders, identified by other grandmothers. The GMP training curriculum is rooted in core values of collectivist, or communal, cultures, reflecting the cardinal African concept of *Ubuntu* which refers to solidarity and interdependency between people (Nussbaum, 2003). The conceptual basis for the curriculum differs markedly from the conventional *western leader-follower notion of authoritative leadership and draws on notions of collective leadership* (Hughes, 2005); *connective leadership*, proposed by South Africans, Kirk and Shutte (2004) and *indigenous leadership,* elucidated by researchers working with indigenous people in New Zealand and North America (Cajete, 2016).

The innovative leadership training strategy addressed five interrelated objectives: to strengthen grandmothers' self-confidence in their role as community leaders; to increase solidarity between grandmother leaders and with other grandmothers in the community to support girls; to strengthen grandmothers' knowledge of the changes girls experience during adolescence; to strengthen grandmothers' ability to communicate with girls using an approach based on listening and dialogue; and to increase their collaboration with other community leaders (men and women) to promote GHD.

The training program consists of four two-day-long modules conducted over the course of 6 months with small groups of ten grandmother leaders. The training curriculum, based on adult education principles, specifically designed for illiterate participants, involves a variety of participatory learning activities using drawings, photos, stories, role plays and games to catalyze discussion related

If we want to be effective, we must have a common objective for supporting and protecting our girls

to the five objectives. The training took place in 20 sites with a total of 320 grandmother leaders. 6 months after the training, individual interviews were conducted with a convenience sample of 103 grandmother participants, to assess the effects of the training. Focus groups were also conducted with adolescent girls specifically to understand their perception of grandmother-adolescent communication and relationships.

Interview data was analyzed manually based on grounded theory and thematic analysis to identify key themes related to the training objectives. From the individual responses, certain parameters of those themes were quantified. Assessment data revealed positive changes related to all five training objectives.

Grandmother leaders' increased self-confidence

In the evaluation interviews, the majority of

grandmothers (89%) stated that through the training their confidence in themselves as leaders and the importance of their role in the community increased. For example, one grandmother leader who now exudes with self-confidence said, "Now, I can stand on the roof and say what I think with a loud voice, without crying and without trembling. And I no longer hesitate to say what I think in community meetings".

Solidarity between grandmothers

In the individual interviews, grandmothers were asked if the relationships between grandmother leaders had changed since the training. Most grandmothers (92%) stated that there is more solidarity between them than in the past. For example, "The training helped us realize that if we want to be effective, we must have a common objective for supporting and protecting our girls". It appears that grandmothers' enthusiastic participation

in the training is explained in part by the fact that it contributed to bolstering this cherished, but weakening cultural value.

Grandmothers' knowledge of adolescent changes

All grandmothers stated that they had acquired useful new knowledge regarding adolescent girls' development. The learning activities provided grandmothers with accurate information on adolescence and all expressed their openness to and appreciation of the new information which has helped them to understand adolescents' bad behavior and to be more tolerant toward it.

Grandmothers' improved communication with girls

In Senegal, as in many African cultures, the traditional way of communicating with children is very directive. All grandmothers (100%) stated that they had changed how they communicate with girls now favoring listening and dialogue. Confirming these changes in grandmothers' communication style, 90% of girls interviewed confirmed that "grandmothers have changed the way they talk to us, no longer giving us orders. Now, they listen to us and talk to us in a calm way."

Increased grandmother collaboration with other community leaders

The majority of grandmothers stated that their collaboration with other community leaders, including male traditional and religious leaders, has increased. They attribute this to their greater individual and collective confidence acquired through the training. 73% gave examples of activities carried out with male leaders to address community problems, including many related to GHD. Significant examples

of these grandmother-initiated collective actions include: blocking child marriages planned by fathers; increasing family support for girls' education; and mobilizing their communities to abandon female genital mutilation.

Discussion:

The results of the Grandmother Leadership Training reported here are very positive and clearly support the idea that grandmothers constitute an abundant and underutilized resource for efforts to promote girls' rights and well-being. It is important to state that these results cannot be attributed solely to the leadership training, as this strategy is part of the larger GHD program in which grandmother leaders were also involved.

Many community programs to support girls give little attention to grandmothers' culturally-designated role to protect and promote girls' development and totally ignore the existence and potential of natural grandmother leaders. Women-focused development programs invariably involve adolescent girls and women, reflecting a bias against grandmothers that they cannot learn and won't change. Results of GMP's experience with grandmother leadership training which increased both their knowledge and collective sense of empowerment to support girls, clearly defies conventional wisdom and demonstrates that *old dogs can learn new tricks.*

Leadership training of natural grandmother leaders increased their sense of empowerment to reclaim their culturally-designated role in communities and it simultaneously increased communities' realization that grandmothers constitute an invaluable but neglected source of *cultural capital* (Matarasso, 2001) for families and communities. As an inherent part of all community contexts, natural

grandmother leaders exist, in both rural and urban areas. Given similarities in the hierarchical and collectivist structure of non-western societies across Africa, Asia and Latin America, it is hypothesized that this training strategy would be well-received by grandmother leaders in communities across the three continents and would strengthen their role to benefit girls and their families.

The collective leadership development model underpinning the grandmother leader training strategy appears to be particularly relevant in collectivist cultures in the Global South where interconnectedness and solidarity are primordial values and where inclusive and collective decision-making are valued.

This experience illustrates how natural grandmother leaders can be empowered to be effective protagonists in their communities to support girls' rights and development. It challenges those who design programs for non-western collectivist settings that narrowly-focus on girls to deepen their understanding of the characteristics of those cultural contexts in which girls are embedded, to examine the ageist biases that have blinded many organizations to the invaluable grandmother resource and to recognize the power of transformative adult education approaches to strengthen the leadership and well-being of communities.

Dr. Aubel has worked for many years in community maternal and child health and education programs primarily in Africa but also in Latin America, Asia and The Pacific. She is the co-founder of Grandmother Project (GMP) – Change through Culture. She lives between Rome and West Africa where GMP has a small staff and office.

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Northern Products taking women empowerment to a new level in Hwange District, Matabeleland North Province, Zimbabwe

Nyarai Sabeka and Yvonne Phiri

In Zimbabwe milestones have been achieved in order to promote gender equality and ensure women empowerment. These include policy and legislative reforms. The government is signatory to various regional and international conventions and treaties, declarations and protocols that seek to promote and create an enabling environment for the attainment of gender equality and women empowerment. These include the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW:1991), the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) adopted to promulgate a set of principles concerning the equality of men and women and the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, (1997).

The legal Age of Majority Act, the Sexual Offences Act and the Domestic Violence Act are some of the legislation enacted to promote gender equality and protect women's rights. The National Gender Policy (2002) provides guidelines and the institutional framework to engender all sectorial policies. Gender focal points have been established in all ministries and parastatals to spearhead gender mainstreaming. The Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development was formed in 1995 to oversee all gender programs and to facilitate gender mainstreaming in all sector ministries. The government also adopted 16 Days Campaign against Gender Based Violence and The One Billion Rising Campaign.

Women play a pivotal role in sustainable development. Gender based violence (GBV) denies women the ability to fully utilize their basic human rights and realize their full potential. In an effort to reduce GBV the Ministry of Women Affair, Gender and Community Development, non-governmental organisations such as United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and civil society are working together to reduce incidents and cases of GBV in communities. This has been done through community mobilization of women, men and young people to support gender equality initiatives.

Women have made significant progress in overcoming societal barriers and

Graduation ceremony for those who completed the detergent making workshop.

Another graduation ceremony picture, women being empowered through Patience Kashiri's initiative.

empowering themselves. Patience Kashiri of Lwendulu village in Hwange, Zimbabwe, is one of those women who have faced the harsh patriarchal environment with bravery. Born thirty-five years ago in Karoi, Zimbabwe Patience, a single mother of three, is a victim of GBV. Her personal life experience prompted her not to play victim but be active in addressing and fighting GBV. Patience realized that women's empowerment was crucial if women are to support themselves and empower them to make informed decisions and not endure abuse. Resultantly, she embarked on a plan of action in which she seeks to empower

women through various projects and trainings in Hwange District.

Hwange District is a small coal mining town situated in one of the hottest regions of Zimbabwe. Hwange Colliery Company which is the largest employer in the town was founded in 1902. The Company's employment strength is currently at two thousand five hundred. However, with the current economic meltdown, the mine scaled down operations resulting in a downward review of salaries and retrenchment of some of its employees, the majority who were breadwinners. The women were not spared from the predicament as they were forced to help their husbands make ends meet. This predicament saw a rise in prostitution and spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Moreover, the situation became a breeding ground for GBV as poverty and hunger caused disputes within the home. As a result, it became crucial that women rise up and empower themselves.

Patience is an epitome of resilience and unbridled zeal. She began her project Northern Products in a bid to empower herself and the women of Hwange District.

> **Gender focal points have been established in all ministries and parastatals to spearhead gender mainstreaming.**

> **Gender based violence (GBV) denies women the ability to fully utilize their basic human rights and realize their full potential.**

Her project focuses on making detergents, soap, petroleum jelly and production of juice with ingredients and materials sourced from Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. Her target group consist mainly of single mothers and youths. Currently she has trained approximately seven hundred women in Hwange and Binga Districts. Participants usually pay eighty Zimbabwean dollars for a two-day training workshop. In February 2019 she conducted a refresher course which saw eighty-six women in Victoria Falls being retrained. The training program was in partnership with an organization called Progressive African Youth Network (PAYN)

and the government. Those women who have been trained sell their wares to the public in line with the governments empowerment program meant to empower small to medium enterprises. Patience has eleven groups which she has trained and are meant to empower women in their communities. Currently they make their products from their homes as there is no funds to rent space to operate from as yet. Some of the groups that received training include Hands Together, Together as one, M and T Investments, Women of Virtue and Golden Angels. However, Patience is faced with a myriad of challenges such as lack of funding, office space, illiteracy amongst women and failure for the products to penetrate the mainstream market because of the long tiresome Standards Association of Zimbabwe (SAZ) procedure.

Patience also hosts a talk show called Patie's Talk Show through the program " *Lebeleka Nhukaji"*, (Speak Out Women), which focuses on enlightening people on gender based violence, HIV/AIDS and child marriages. This talk show has managed to reach approximately five hundred people. However the major hindrances are patriarchy and tribalism. The language barrier has affected Patie's Talk Show in the sense that it is shunned by members of society on the grounds that she does not hail from Hwange District in terms of birth place and does not speak the local languages. As a result, she finds it difficult to penetrate into the communities and discuss the issues in depth. On the other hand, due to patriarchal thinking and attitudes some man shun attending the talk show with some citing they have nothing to learn from a woman, worse a single mother. However, her effort has not been in vain as there have been a noted decrease in gender based violence cases in the areas she has reached such as Binga.

There is need for women led organizations to be capacitated in terms of funding such that they become self -reliant and uplift their communities. The country faces challenges of partial domestication of international instruments and inadequate implementation of the national gender policy. A lot still needs to be done in Zimbabwe in order to fully achieve women's empowerment and women's emancipation as the fight rages on another challenge in

A woman shares her view on child sexual abuse during one of Patience Kashiri's talk show.

the form of imbalances between rural and urban women. In this case Patience is not spared as Hwange is semi urban, there is lack of meaningful development, hence the need for women to be capacitated in order for them to become empowered. The other factor is that there is lack of appreciation and acknowledgement of the biological roles that women have to endure on top of being entrepreneurs. Cultural stereotypes have resulted in lack of social acceptability for women. Thus there is need for community based networks which will be availed with resources that can assist women to support their projects. Patience's future vision is to see her project, Northern

Products supplying other Provinces with detergents and juice, and going beyond borders. She also hopes to create employment for women and youths in her community.

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> *There is need for women led organizations to be capacitated in terms of funding such that they become self -reliant and uplift their communities.*

Empowerment
from the Inside Out

Janine Ward, Director, SPACE for Impact

Background: Jewels of Hope

Jewels of Hope is a non-profit organisation that was registered in 2004, in response to the HIV & Aids pandemic in southern Africa. The focus was on giving orphaned and vulnerable children jewellery-making skills as well as personal development skills, such as basic financial literacy. In its first 10 years, the organisation successfully reached around 250 children in South Africa, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Malawi. The long-term impact for families and communities, however, was limited, and the organisation Board opted for a more relevant and asset-based approach to better build the capacity of communities to care for and support their own children. The decision was taken to formally adopt the ABCD approach in 2016.

Approach: ABCD

Asset-based Citizen-led Development (ABCD) builds on the principles of the participatory approach to development.

The Asset-based core principles to development are:

- **Community-led development** is one of the main strategies to sustainable social development—development processes driven by people who are directly affected by the challenges they seek to address

- **Stories of success:** the starting point is the shared history of success stories in bringing about change in the community

- **Acknowledging the power of collaboration and social capital:** the main resource in communities is the strong social ties that exist between community members and the different forms of organisations that are formed

- **Appreciation and mobilization of existing assets in the community:** every community, no matter how poor, has access to different physical, social, financial, human and natural assets, which can be mobilized for community action

- **Stimulating opportunity seeking mindset:** ABCD is about changing mindsets towards a 'glass-half-full' approach to life

- **Social entrepreneurship:** is about creating social and economic value with available assets

Asset-based Citizen-led Development (ABCD) builds on the principles of the participatory approach to development.

Crucial in the ABCD approach is that the power over development processes is held by the communities themselves. This is one of the main strategies to sustainable social development. Through an ABCD process, communities become empowered from the inside out, which is crucial in active citizenship and ensuring government accountability. Also, communities become better positioned to claim their rights. The role of NGOs within this approach is one of facilitating and connecting to other stakeholders.

The Scene: Zandspruit, Johannesburg, South Africa:

Emily Mashele is a resident of Zandspruit, a sprawling informal settlement in eastern Johannesburg. She earns an income through domestic work and was for a time employed by Jewels of Hope as a jewellery trainer. She continues to serve as a Jewels of Hope coordinator in Zandspruit on a voluntary basis and is very involved in several community-building initiatives through her church.

Emily had arranged for 10 people to attend an orientation meeting so that Janine Ward could outline the purpose of the Jewels of Hope Pilot process in Zandspruit. There was a lot of interest in the process, and everyone present agreed to be involved as volunteers and to attend the ABCD training workshops. Arrangements were made for the first workshop to take place and tapping into the assets of ABCD, Francinah Mbekeni from Mama's Kitchen, a small

catering business in Zandspruit, agreed to cater for the group.

The perception: A community is determined by an individual's worldview

The first workshop was well attended, and the group members were eager and participated actively. ABCD focuses on the "glass half full" as the lens for discovery and participation so when participants were asked the question, *"What is fantastic about living in Zandspruit?"* they responded with heartwarming answers like:

- Everything is near

- We have water

- There is good public transport

- Those who pay rent, pay low rental rates

- There are lots of development opportunities

- The roads are good

- There are lots of shops

- There are lots of neighbours – good for relationships and for business

- There are lots of people to sell things to

- It is a busy community – always something going on

- Some celebrities choose to live here

- There are banks, 2 clinics, 2 primary schools, many crèches, many churches, a nursery, a shopping centre, a garage, and a vegetable market

ABCD doesn't just help people discover local strengths and hope for the best. We also inquire how we can discover what we have and use these assets for good. The second question asked was: "What value do you bring to the community of Zandspruit?" which provided the following responses:

- **Sarah:** as a teacher, I build up children and transform them. As a Christian, I care for the children's wellbeing

- **Francinah:** I like to meet people and tell stories/give advice on goal-setting. An

example is a neighbour who was trapped and I advised her to save every little bit of money she could – she has now built herself a house!

- **Emily:** I like to build people and improve their self-esteem; and I am open-hearted

- **Nomusa:** I like people to live in peace – I counsel couples and friends who are in conflict

- **Oniccah:** I keep people informed and I help others (I don't like to see people suffering)

- **Ouma:** I am an evangelist for Christ, and I am a motivator of others

- **Joyce:** I like to help people practically (e.g. taking people to the clinic)

These strengths and assets were listed and applauded as showing great wealth in the community.

Asset Mapping: discovery of assets and strengths rather than problems and needs

Based on the 6 assets of ABCD, this led into a discussion about the 5 Livelihoods Assets that we can map in a community that will assist us in starting a process of developing solutions in the community. The Livelihoods Assets are:

- **Physical** – the church building which is used for workshops and community meetings

- **Financial** – most members of the community are part of at least one "stokvel" – an informal savings scheme that enables low-income individuals to benefit from group savings habits. Burial societies are another way in which members club their limited finances together to support each other when there is a family burial

- **Social** – the wealth of relationships and connections within Zandspruit was encouraging to see. Members take part in a variety of community structures which enable them to be supported in a number of ways

- **Natural** – land is limited in Zandspruit as shacks and dwellings are placed very close to one another. There are, however, outlying areas for gardens and grazing for livestock

- **Human** – the elder members of the community are retired teachers, artisans and businesspeople, and some of the younger members have managed to get some training as welders, glaziers and construction workers

The next month, a second workshop was held and it was heartwarming to hear that the group members had felt so valued and appreciated after the first workshop. One participant said she had never been told

that she was valuable – and she is one of the oldest members of the group!

We then talked about all the 5 Livelihoods Assets again, and made a colourful tool to help group members remember what these were and how to map them.

The next step was to create a community map of Zandspruit – because the group members came from different sections of Zandspruit, they agreed to focus on the central part of the community for the purposes of this exercise. There was great debate and animated conversation as the various Physical and Natural Assets were discussed. This mapping tool is excellent for involving all members of a community, and developing a sense of ownership in the process.

This mapping tool is excellent for involving all members of a community, and developing a sense of ownership in the process.

The Workshop ended with a recap of the 5 Livelihood Assets, a discussion of how the group members were going to share this information and how they would conduct a community mapping exercise on their own, to identify all the Livelihoods Assets in Zandspruit before the next workshop.

Summary:

The Zandspruit workshops were extremely encouraging and well attended with people who care enough to act. The second phase of the Pilot process (the Business training) was also discussed and the group members agreed to find 10 more people who might be suitable to take part in the business training with Dynamic Business Start-up Project (DBSP). This work will be in the near future and we are thoroughly enjoying the journey of discovery with local community members.

Janine Ward, Founder, SPACE for Impact has 32 years experience in strengths-based, participatory community development, community capacity building, small business development, HIV & AIDS, project management and fundraising. She has a BA Social Work and is an Asset-based Citizen-led Development (ABCD) and Poverty Stoplight trainer. Janine works with business partner, Anne Timms, facilitating training for organisations, government and faith communities.

Baz'Art: From the not so typical good shop to a fully fledge showroom, Table d'hôte and Catering Unit

Yumilah Govinden for ENLF Foundation

Beautifully niched in an evergreen garden, Baz'Art is above all a sanctuary for women seeking solace from the hustle bustle of everyday life; a unique place which cradles the longing for belongingness and nurtures one back to worthiness and wholeness. At Baz'Art, growth is centred around learning of crafts and the transformation of self to evolve and glow is the central covenant of this life-changing project.

Taking into consideration the reported challenges encountered by women, (especially women in rural areas) such as poverty, low literacy levels and unemployment, ENL Foundation as a pioneer in promoting inclusivity at grassroots has been seeking ways to empower women so that they can become their own agents of positive change.

In line with the CSR program of ENL Group, ENL Foundation founded Baz'Art Kreasion in March 2011 as an initiative to increase personal and work quality of woman in the St Pierre village in the district of Moka in Mauritius. The main philosophy is to focus on Women development and empowerment, through entrepreneurship skills through promotion of arts & crafts. In the past five years, fifty women have benefited from these trainings and empowerment programs offered at Baz'Art.

> *A unique place which cradles the longing for belongingness and nurtures one back to worthiness and wholeness.*

We all know that art and craft-making as a leisure-based activity yields numerous benefits for participants, including improved wellbeing, an enhanced sense of self and economical gains. However, in the context of a social enterprise it is a tedious task to focus on economic growth and transition towards profit-making. Thus, despite training on key crafting skills, most women do find it hard to make a living out of their newly acquired skills. This trend is omnipresent, be it in Mauritius, in the region and worldwide. Hence, since its creation, Baz'Art has acted as a service provider from providing the raw materials to marketing the end produce. Participating women are paid according to the products produced or services provided.

Since its inception, Baz'Art has trained women in art therapy, candle making, recycling of newspapers, crochets, quilling and mosaic. All these crafting skills are then funneled through order intakes, thus ensuring a regular income for these women. Today Baz'Art has a showroom of its own run by the women beneficiaries themselves. Based on its experiences Baz'Art seeks to become a key player in crafts sector in the Indian Ocean Region.

After reinforcing a sense of efficacy and inducing a strong sense of community in the women of Baz'Art; coupled with psychological empowerment and enhanced social capital, Baz'Art is now innovating with a "table d'hôte" and catering unit in order to enhance the possibilities of furthering economic empowerment for the participants.

Baz'Art is one of the success stories of a socially oriented project turning into profit-making enterprise with a shared value framework. However, Baz'Art primarily is and shall always be about the journey for enabling these women to undertake the necessary steps to claim ownership of their lives and stand tall in their respective communities after addressing and healing their deepest apprehensions and vulnerabilities leading to enhanced individual and community resilience.

Engaged in Community development since 2002, Joëlle Rabot-Honoré is IACD's Country Correspondent for Mauritius. She is currently working as Project Coordinator for ENL Foundation, committed to enable sustainable communities to empower local community for autonomy.

https://www.enl.mu/en/citizenship/ enl-foundation/about-enl-foundation

"I wish the world was run by women. Women who have given birth and know the value of their creation."

Simin Daneshvar

"One can never consent to creep when one feels an impulse to soar"

Helen Keller

Working with men:
Closing the loop of Gender & Development

Abhijit Das

Over the last 50 years 'gender inequality' has become an important consideration in development. My own involvement in gender in development started thirty years ago when I was working as young doctor in the Himalayan districts of what was then Uttar Pradesh, India. I realised that women's reproductive health was deeply influenced by social customs. Women had to face many restrictions around menstruation and childbirth. Many women suffered from prolapse of the uterus, a condition in which the uterus, usually held in place inside the body by a set of ligaments which acted like 'guy ropes', started sagging because these ligaments had become loose. This was a direct outcome of women's continuing workload, including immediately after childbirth.

As a young and enthusiastic doctor, I advised women on how they could change the situation but I realised that this was easier said than done. Women had little decision about their own lives and how they lived it. There were layers of social control, starting with their mothers-in law right up to the temple priests and the elders of the village who were deeply concerned about pollution and desecration of sacred places if a woman having her periods happened to be there. This led to my own efforts of trying to build the self-image, confidence and collective aspiration of women in their homes and communities, a process we know as 'empowerment'. These women started taking leadership not only for their own health and that of their children, but also in areas of income-generation and environmental conservation.

Twenty years ago, I shifted from the Himalayan region to the plains of Uttar Pradesh. Violence against women, especially domestic violence had emerged as a new area of concern in the development arena. I had become part of a larger state level advocacy coalition on the issue. A state level convention in Lucknow brought together over 3500 women from across the state. As part of the organising team my responsibility was to manage the food. From the side-lines of the kitchen tent I observed that there were around 100 men at this convention who had accompanied the women. Watching these men absorbed in listening to the discussions, but with no opportunity to participate, a colleague and I felt that there could be a better way to get men into the conversation. While domestic violence, concerned women and their rights and safety, men were what could be called the 'elephant in the room'. We felt that there had to other ways to get men involved, other than encouraging and supporting women.

> *We felt that there had to be other ways to get men involved, other than encouraging and supporting women.*

We started discussions with many of these first hundred or so men who had come to the women's convention about what could men do differently , not just as encouragement to women but in their own lives and roles that they played in family and society. Through these discussions, men started drawing up lists of things they could do differently. First and foremost were the things that men could do in their homes. Starting from doing the bed, to fetching the water, to cutting the vegetables, these men started doing things which were assumed to be women's work. Then these men started taking care of the smaller children, feeding them, getting

ready for school, playing with them. At the same time we started a public campaign with a very simple message – ' Chuppi todo Hinsa roko' which loosely translates as 'We need to break the silence to stop the violence.' The campaign required each man to take three resolutions. The first was that 'I will not commit any violence', the second 'I will speak up when I see or learn of violence' and thirdly 'I will support the woman who is facing violence'. Through these simple messages we hoped to challenge the 'conspiracy of silence' which enabled and endorsed domestic violence and shake off the violence associated stigma which prevented women from speaking out against it. And soon a state-wide network called MASVAW (Men's Action of Stopping Violence Against Women) took shape.

In the beginning we were not sure that these things would 'sustain', because a question we constantly faced comments and questions like 'Come on it can't be true!' or 'What is in it for men?' or 'Why would men give up their privileges?' or even 'What do women have to say about this?'. This meant we had to constantly interrogate and examine these changes. For the last fifteen years or more we have been conducting a series of studies to understand how and why men and boys can and should become engaged in 'gender and development' interventions across different states in India and in different domains. We have documented the results in different forms shared them across diverse platforms. Some of the lessons that we have distilled are as follows:

1. Gender equality is not a competition. In order that gender equality succeeds as a social order, both women and men must gain from it. It cannot be a 'victory' for women and a 'loss' for men.

2. Men also gain from gender equality. But these gains are not in the 'visible' public domain but in the more invisible but also important 'personal' domain. This is in the form of improved relationships with women in their family – their spouse, daughter, sister, mother. They also have more meaningful relationships with their 'male' friends. Men from different social groups across the country have counted this gain as the most achievement for them.

3. It is important to develop an understanding of privilege and disadvantage at the same time. Patriarchy has historically created privileges for men and boys, but all men are not in positions of advantage or privilege all the time. They feel uncomfortable in their spaces of 'disadvantage' and can be sensitised to feel or empathise with the discomfort they cause in their own loved ones through their somewhat 'uncaring' behaviours. Men develop a sense of solidarity and shared aspiration with women in their families and a collaboration with other male colleagues.

4. Men need their own groups to guide and support them in their process of change. This group becomes a space of sharing doubts and dilemma, mutual support as well as a forum for collective action. When men start changing their actions like fetching water or washing clothes they are often pushed back and ridiculed. Peer support is important to overcome this stage.

5. When a group of men share a new understanding of social relationships, both with women and with other men they start taking public action for change. Actions that can support girls' education, women's participation in local governments or even for conservation action or income generation, start first by men taking responsibilities for domestic tasks which free women's time to engage in these activities. Then men can also intervene in the relevant institutions to create more opportunities or reduce the existing hurdles. Public action is a sequel to personal action and is an essential indicator of the deep personal commitment to equality and change.

6. Another feature which has been important for our work has been to relate it to work on women's empowerment at the operational level as well as constantly take feedback from women's rights activists during the design and review phases. This has enabled us not to lose sight of women's empowerment which continues to be pivotal to all actions towards gender equality.

Over the years we have learnt that the way to achieve these results is not revolutionary and builds upon some of the earlier lessons that we all include in our development practice. These include mobilisation, consciousness raising as well as collective reflection and action. A key component is deep personal conviction among those who are part of the intervention that this is not just a public action but a part of their own belief system. Afterall 'personal is political' has been one of the first lessons in the field of gender equality and women's rights and it remains relevant for this work with men as well. Today the need to engage men and boys within the work towards gender equality has been acknowledged and I hope the lessons that we have learnt from our work can also help others to close the loop.

Abhijit Das is a public health physician with over thirty years of experience in the development arena. He is currently Managing Trustee, Centre for Health and Social Justice, in New Delhi and Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Global Health, University of Washington, Seattle, USA. Abhijit is among the pioneers on involving men for gender equality. abhijitdas@chsj.org

It is far beyond gender equality for Rohingya women in the age of growing urbanization: **Rohingya Community**

Ferdousi Akter

In this era of technology, science, and logic, we all somehow find ourselves working toward a future which provides fairness and justice for all living creatures. Urbanization is growing faster than ever before, however, can we still say that our society is well-established in terms of human equality? In most cases, we cannot put the term 'equal' right before 'society' because of society's ideology towards gender equality. A community might have equality of religion, caste or financial position, but we face a great amount of resistance when the community asks for equality.

In terms of gender, the situation is best represented in the unfairness between men and women. Women in society bear the brunt of the unpleasant experiences regarding inequality. The development of gender roles and expectations begins early with the socialization of girls and boys, and continues throughout the course of life. This results in power inequalities and the unequal distribution of paid and unpaid jobs. At the same time, the patriarchy restrains women's access to social and employment-related rights and economic resources and assigns them a larger share of domestic duties with implications for women's status (Carme Borrell, Laia Palència et al 2013).

This situation is evidenced across the globe, starting from countries and communities with invisible economic growth to places with the highest level of the economic establishment. So it comes as no surprise that inequality is still a problem in understudied communities like the Rohingya community – which is one of the most marginalized, deprived communities among ethnic minorities in the world. The article will highlight the parts of Rohingya women's traditions and practices which contrast against women's rights as a whole.

> **The idea of feminism has never been established to them.**

The Rohingyas are the mostly Muslim ethnic minority in the Buddhist mainstream country. Living in the Rakhine state in Mayanmar, they have long face persecution in a country that neither recognizes nor wants them. They are known as illegal immigrants despite having lived in Myanmar for many generations, but the country's government has denied their residency and citizenship. They have been fleeing to Bangladesh since the 1960s, oppressed by both the government and local population

in Myanmar. The Rohingya community has moved from Myanmar to Bangladesh several times and each time, the Bangladesh Government jointly with UNHCR repatriated members of the community back to Myanmar. This repatriation is not sustainable, and it is little wonder that this community has been ignored for such a prolonged period. That is one of the reasons for it to be constantly understudied and underestimated.

Therefore, the Rohingya refugees are already severely disadvantaged, stateless and deprived of the means or opportunities to build self-regulating lives. In this age of Globalization, they

are far from education, technology and modern civic amenities, making their standard of living limited and narrow.

Due to the tenuous status of the Rohingya in Myanmar, they have not been able to get a formal mainstream education. In fact, the education and literacy that they have been taught in 'Madrasas' (institution for Muslims) are misinterpretations by extremist 'ustads' (teachers who teach in madrasas) who surely have a very limited amount of knowledge of 'Islam'. This factor has lead to a phenomenon of 'Neanderthal-ism', the belief that society must be ruled and dominated by men only. Patriachal is a strong tradition in the Rohingya community. The idea of feminism has never been established to them. Moreover, this asperity has been cherished by the society from the beginning of a female child's life. This is evidenced by the lack of emphasis put on educating girls and leads to society giving no priority to women's values and ideologies as a mothers, grandmothers, sometimes even great grandmothers.

According to Save the Children, when girls reach puberty they are taken out of the public space which belongs to men, boys, children and to some extent, married women (Save the Children 2014: 24).

The traditional role of Rohingya women as mothers, homemakers and family nurturers means that many women lack access to income. The experience that I had in the refugee camp in Bangladesh can fulfill the purpose of writing this, which is to report on the gender inequality situation there.

The influx in migration during August and December 2017 of 720,000 newly arrived refugees from devastated areas of Myanmar's Rakhine state added further misery to the overpopulated Bangladeshi government and its border region people. It can be said that there are now over 1.2 million Rohingya refugees in the country (UNHCR, 2017b). It is reported that the residence of Bangladesh camp area in Cox's Bazar has 52% of Rohingya refugees which are women and girls. Many of these women and girls were exposed to widespread and severe forms of sexual violence in Myanmar before and during their plight in Bangladesh. After displacement, they remain at disproportionate risk of GBV, including domestic and Intimate partner of violence, forced marriage, exploitation and trafficking. For adolescent girls, the risk of GBV is exacerbated by a number of factors including cultural practices, camp insecurity, limited opportunities for family self-development and portable skills development, and inadequate access to education (Nurul Mostafa Kamal Zafari, 2019).

A girl who just reached her puberty in a civilized society would be leading her life normally, where she would get a proper education and life skills. This is absolutely not the case for Rohingya teenagers. The moment female children enter puberty, they are not allowed to go outside and must stay at home and do household

chores until they are married. This leads to a higher instance of child marriage between Rohingyas. Child marriage (involving persons under 18 years old) is another form of SGBV that is common among Rohingya communities (99, 100). Girls that are getting married at an early age get too little information about reproductive health and have little influence over family planning. (101), (accessed Jan 08 2020). The practice of child marriage is nothing but a folk tale told by Imam (religious individual in Islam) who has a petty amount of knowledge on Islam.

Boys can also get married at the beginning of their 17-18 years. Unsurprisingly, such young marriages may cause severe reproductive health issues for a child bride. Sometimes, frustration leads to a serious family disturbance. For example, a husband might abuse his wife mentally and physically. Married underage girls are at increased risk of a range of physical and psychological consequences including intimate partner violence.

Even after marriage, decisions relating to childcare and contraception are heavily influenced by family members, especially the husband and mother-in- law. Women are encouraged to have as many children as they can. It is often seen among Rohingyas that women are expected to become pregnant and give birth shortly after marriage. The use of contraceptives is limited – they believe Islam has always encouraged people to have more children. Also, as the Rohingya culture is patrilocal, a woman must move in with her in-laws right after marriage. She transforms herself into one of them. In this family, she cannot make a contribution in decision making, this is left to the elders and the elder sons. Even in earning, it is strictly prohibited for a woman to bring revenue in the household.

Ultimately, a women's social life revolves around the domestic realm where she cannot express her true form nor can she feel useful when her work is underestimated and unappreciated. A Rohingya woman mainly interacts with women in her own household, her family members if they visit, and her closest neighbours. Women rely on the women in their household for their knowledge of

Islam and of women's health and reproductive issues. As mentioned above, háfes women can also provide counselling in the pilgrim tours (Musk'rat Jamaat) on "personal matters, such on how to behave with one's husband, how to behave when pregnant, how to deal with the first menstruations, etc.". This places women háfes as good intermediaries for women's reproductive health messaging. (ACF 2015:18)

Thus the fate of inequality surely affects the female individual itself, including her family, society, community, her own country and her host country. If a woman feels unmotivated, this could lead to serious mental health problems. Her family might also suffer because of that, and the community as a whole. If women receive a proper education, they might be able to advocate for their own constitutional rights. This would be helpful for surviving in her host country where she constantly lives on the edge of life.

In the end, it reminds me of the words of Mala Yousafzai when she said, " We can not all succeed when half of us are held back". Which brings us back again to the same question that, " Can we still say that our society is well established in terms of human equality?"

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> *Women rely on the women in their household for their knowledge of Islam and of women's health and reproductive issues.*

Practical Insights:
Working on Women's Health in Uttar Pradesh

Jashodhara Dasgupta

Some of my early work in community development in 1989-90 was within a non-government organization in a district of Uttarakhand which was earlier undivided Uttar Pradesh. I worked as a community health educator, accompanying the clinical team that drove around with a doctor and paramedics and provided immunization shots, ante-natal care and child nutrition advice. I held Mothers' Meetings in each village, explaining child malnutrition to the women and suggesting how they could improve the diet of their small children.

Looking back, I do not recall asking the women what they usually fed the children, or what their own work schedules were like, and whether they had any support with child care. I was busy educating and advising them: perhaps I had already stereotyped them as ignorant rural women who neglected their children. I had also assumed that it was naturally women's work to bear and rear children and manage all the food processing for the household, and never addressed the men in the family. Yet even then I was aware that local men were notorious for whiling away their time in the local tea-shops playing carrom, while women looked after the cattle, worked in the fields, brought home fodder, water and fuel on their heads and managed all household chores. I was part of training the local women health workers and pre-school (Balwadi) teachers, and enjoyed their cheerful conversations, their collective singing and dancing during these training workshops. I never asked the women about their own lives, their struggles and their health needs: it was only after a couple of years that I realized these women suffered from many reproductive illnesses like heavy white discharge, which worried them, and uterine prolapse, which didn't worry them.

> *I had adopted an entirely top-down approach to my community development work.*

I now understand that I had adopted an entirely top-down approach to my community development work, in which I had decided my own knowledge was superior to theirs, as a person with a class advantage, with many more years of formal education and far greater exposure to urban life. I do realize this is a common trend among community development workers, who go into the field and conduct meetings and discussions without actually providing sufficient opportunity for people to share their own issues and their perspectives on how local problems can be addressed.

However as the years passed, and I learned more, I began to use participatory approaches where women could reflect on their own problems, and analyse some of the reasons leading to these problems. Around 1998, as part of another NGO, I was working with a rural women's empowerment programme, where we attempted to develop a cadre of gender-sensitive staff who implemented the plans with the rural women. Gender training was the buzzword; all male and female project staff had to be 'gender-trained' and they sat through days of long discussions and exercises. The analysis of the social construction of gender certainly challenged their 'cultural notions', but staff did not protest too strongly, perhaps because their jobs depended on attending the training!

Some time later, one of the lower-caste female members of staff was assaulted on the street by a local hoodlum. She was rescued by some of her upper-caste male colleagues, who also happened to be locals themselves. She took her case to the police and the matter went up to the courts, but her male colleagues refused to testify. They dared not risk their community identity by going against the assailant, and preferred to deny anything had happened. The incident was clearly a reality check to me: something was certainly missing here. An intensive process of gender training had not been effective in helping men to develop the courage to speak out against gender-based violence: the conflicting politics of caste and clan alliances had been too strong for them to support a woman in seeking gender justice and the male staff were unable to adopt new behaviour in a situation of conflicting interests.

What had gone wrong? While the gender training had used participatory methods appropriate for adult learning pedagogy, it had obviously not built sufficient ability to relate the knowledge of how gender politics plays out in situations outside the project intervention. The linkages between caste and gender in the oppression of women had been missed out even as the gender training industry has become a development formula, like PRA (participatory rapid appraisal) and most funders insist that a 'dash of gender' is added to all development interventions.

A few years later, the northern state of Uttar Pradesh became separate from Uttarakhand, and I began working with rural women of some districts of UP who belonged to marginalized castes, had very low incomes and almost no formal education. Having learned from my earlier experiences, I began with a participatory enquiry into their health status in 2002-03. The findings indicated that basic public services for primary health care were very unevenly available in rural Uttar Pradesh, leading to low immunization rates, poor maternal survival and infant mortality. There were around forty thousand women losing their lives each year owing to pregnancy or childbirth, and many more thousand infants unable to survive until their fifth birthday. However, the government and health experts had diagnosed this as basically a 'demand-side problem', which could be solved by 'demand-side financing' for getting all pregnant women into hospitals.

> *It emerged that women's access to health services was shaped by their own caste, class and educational status.*

In order to understand the causes more deeply, I began to examine actual incidents of maternal death or other reproductive illnesses, interviewing families and service providers. It emerged that women's access to health services was shaped by their

महिलाओं की यही दरकार—मुफ्त मातृ स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं की जबाबदेही तय करे सरकार!

मातृ मृत्यु की समीक्षा करो— समीक्षा करो!

महिला स्वास्थ्य अधिकार मंच उ०प्र०

services and medicines were meant to be free.

From 2006, I became part of a state-wide effort to mobilize rural women leaders and provide them with information about what health services had been promised by the government, which led to their organization as a grassroot collective, the Mahila Swasthya Adhikar Manch (MSAM, Women's Health Rights Forum) which became active in several districts. Several thousand women came together and began campaigning across Uttar Pradesh for health entitlements such as free medicines, reproductive services without paying bribes, and other aspects of health care, refusing to believe any longer that maternal or infant deaths were caused by bad luck or fate.

Coming together as a group enabled the women to reflect on the problems commonly faced

Coming together as a group enabled the women to reflect on the problems commonly faced, to analyze why they were treated so badly and to build shared strategies of how to tackle this. The information about government schemes and laws was provided to the women using simple pictorial materials since they did not have formal literacy. Using pictorial checklists, the women regularly checked the quality of services at their health-sub-centres, identified cases where the maternal care services had not been provided and collectively shared all this information with the district health officials. In some districts the officials responded to the women's feedback by providing the MSAM leaders with their personal cell-phone numbers as a sort of hotline in case they need to get in touch for an emergency.

Going beyond healthcare, the MSAM leaders began to examine whether their local Anganwadi centres were actually providing supplementary nutrition to pregnant women and small children, and whether regular wages and livelihood opportunities were provided within the MNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005). Women leaders learned about the laws regarding domestic violence and began to take up cases of household abuse, as well as check the implementation of various social security schemes.

The various local initiatives by the rural women leaders and the local activists

own caste, class and educational status. The fact that they belonged to poor families with little access to government officials encouraged local health providers to remain absent from duty, to treat the women badly, to deny health services unless paid significant bribes and to actually turn away the women if they were unable to pay. Poor patients with few social and political resources at their command rarely register formal complaints for fear of victimization and further abuse by the powerful public officials and institutions. These women and their families were often desperate for medical care, and could not make strong demands that public health

> **What can be done when most of the services are in the hands of the private sector which is not effectively regulated by the government?**

who supported them led to many successes, community advancement and improvements in services. This intervention with rural women leaders has been documented in many films and published papers, as an example of grassroot empowerment where women's awareness and agency were strongly enhanced, and they could bring about real changes in their own situation.

However, the question that arises today is, to what extent is this kind of empowerment dependent on an elected government that is the main provider and guarantor of rights, services and entitlements and is answerable to the people? What can be done when most of the services are in the hands of the private sector which is not effectively regulated by the government? In

the last few years, we can observe that the public health services are gradually shifting into an insurance-based model, where the private sector will come to dominate service-provision. The schemes like MNREGA or social security are gradually becoming weaker in their resourcing and may entirely vanish someday. How then can a model of leadership development among rural women that empowers them as active citizens be evolved to address these emerging challenges?

Ms Jashodhara Dasgupta - a public health researcher and advocate on women's rights, who has worked for 34 years in the voluntary sector. Currently Chair of the Governing Body at SAHAYOG, Lucknow. Email – jasho_dg2006@yahoo.com

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*"I will not die an unlived life.
I will not live in fear of falling
or catching fire.
I choose to inhabit my days to allow
my living to open me, to make me
less afraid, more accessible, to loosen
my heart until it becomes a wing,
a torch, a promise.
I choose to risk my significance; to
live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom and that
which came to me as blossom, goes
on as fruit."*

Dawna Markova

"You have not lived a perfect day, even though you earned money, unless you have done something for someone who will never be able to repay you".

Ruth Smeltzer

Review processes with Civil Society Organisations for
BEIJING+25 in west India

Jyoti Desai & Sonia Garcha

INTRODUCTION

In 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women was held at Beijing and Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) (1995) was adopted. At the time five-year milestones were set towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to reach the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. 2020 is therefore a pivotal year for taking stock of progress on the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, embodying the SDGs "leave no one behind".

Maharashtra is a state in west India and has a long history of social change for women's development. From the pre-independence era, leaders like Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule, Tarabai Shinde worked for women's emancipation.

Maharashtra has witnessed a strong women's movement along with a good CSO and state interaction. This has resulted in positive spaces for women and led to strengthening of Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women. Maharashtra has been a pioneer in enacting major laws that have supported women's rights and freedom.

> *2020 is a pivotal year for taking stock of progress on the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*

A need was felt to understand the historical perspective of the women's movement, Beijing +25 processes and its linkage with the frameworks of MDGs and SDGs in Maharashtra. Several grassroots women's groups, community organisers, academicians and others from India had participated in the lead-up preparations to the Beijing conference.

The external and internal environment in the development sector in India has been volatile and funding for discussion platforms has become difficult. Despite these constraints CSO's continue to pursue the passion to make the world a better place to live with dignity and assured human rights for all.

Development Support Team (DST) and Stree Aadhar Kendra (SAK) organised a day long regional workshop in order to

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> *A study of 30 CSOs was conducted on various initiatives for adolescent girls and women*

understand and reflect on the journey of the Beijing Platform for Action to SDGs, revisit the past work, see its alignment with the present development and highlight the challenges faced in advancing women's rights in the last two and half decades. More than 70 delegates from 40 NGOs, Academia and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Foundations joined to deliberate on these.

Covering the 12 areas of concerns in the BPFA, background documents in the local language, were shared to build a perspective for the grassroot NGOs on these processes and enable them to participate in these deliberations.

> *Best practices provided building blocks for development and were an important agenda of this workshop*

To identify themes for discussion a study of 30 CSOs was conducted on various initiatives for adolescent girls and women. Some of the key findings are summarised below:

• More than 50% organisations work on Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women through Self Help Groups/ Federations/Credit Co-operatives/Mahila Mandals. This has enabled promoting women leadership, gender equity, access to safe savings and credit and assets in the name of the women.

• 50% organisations work on Violence Against Women (VAW) through legal awareness, providing support through counselling and working on sensitisation of menfolk. This has led to increased awareness of their rights and the legal provisions to protect them.

• Major areas of intervention for 70% of the organizations are: Sustainable Livelihoods through entrepreneurship development, skill development, providing livelihood opportunities and market linkages to women.

• 30% organisations work on issues related to Climate Change, Water and Soil Conservation, Disaster Mitigation,

Sustainable Agriculture and Organic Farming, Natural Resource Management and Conservation. "Organic farmers", as registered under Participatory Guarantee Scheme of the Central Government are linked to organic markets,

Based on these responses the following four thematic areas were identified for discussion on this day long review process:

1. Policy and mechanisms for Advancement of Women

2. Sustainable Livelihoods

3. Women and Environment

4. Violence Against Women

Since CSOs work passionately with the communities, several of their practices have proven to be very successful. Their best practices provided building blocks for development and were an important agenda of this workshop. This review process revealed the following changes over the past decade and more:

Promotion of Self Help Group model for women in India, by the Government and NGOs has provided a space for women to address their issues and become financially empowered. This has led to a rise in the credibility of women borrowers amongst Formal Financial Institutions. Instances of Below Poverty Line women graduating to an increase in their economic status has been reported across the state of Maharashtra. Increased efforts are now being undertaken for inclusion and participation of women in formal governance mechanisms and increasing their role in positions of power.

> *Increased efforts are now being undertaken for inclusion and participation of women in formal governance mechanisms*

Similarly, there is a greater acceptance of women in key positions visible at the state and national level. Overall, women have taken great strides in different fields like Sports, IT, Government, Corporates, Academia but despite the change there is a need for greater support and acknowledgement of their achievements.

However, there was an overall consensus that while much has been achieved the Women and Economy agenda still needs a rethink on creation of appropriate ecosystem to support women entrepreneurs for start-ups and providing

> *Collaborative efforts and strengthening of processes based on community development practice was identified as a way forward*

angel funds. Potential of multi stakeholder dialogues that recognises diversity, complexity, collaborations, exchange of best practices are some mechanisms that needs to be at center stage in order to create an atmosphere for 'Ease of doing business' with a gender perspective. Alongside, the following areas of concern were also identified as requiring urgent action by all stakeholders:

• Framing of rules and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) for the laws enacted for women still needs to be strengthened and implemented in a stringent manner.

• Women still remain bound by social, cultural and religious taboos which are major obstacles in their growth and development.

• Ownership and decision making with regard to reproductive health needs a major boost

• Cybercrime and anti-trafficking still pose a challenge for vulnerable women

To conclude, a message of greater collaborative efforts and strengthening of processes based on community development practice was identified as a way forward to address gender equality in cross cutting Sustainable Development Goals.

Jyoti Desai is a development professional and worked for more than 20 years in livelihood enhancement of rural and tribal communities.

Sonia Garcha is a member of the CS Pathshala Core committee, an ACM India initiative, and has made significant contribution to strategy development and implementation.

Sonia also volunteers with Development Support Team, an NGO engaged in Women's Empowerment initiatives with a specialization in CSR projects, monitoring and evaluation.

Why can't girls

Anita Paul

Empower locals to find solutions to their own problems, whilst protecting natural resources and ensuring that they retain ownership of the assets created, is Umang's objective says Sunita. 'Expose women to training and education, it is bound to have ripple effect because trade is better than aid' is the guiding spirit for her.

Why can't girls have all the fun, as a mother of two girls she strives to make their and other dreams become a reality as a changemaker in her community. For Sunita, Umang is a dream come true which she co-founded along with others. Mahila Umang Produces Company or Umang as it is popularly known has given wings to 3000 such dreams by providing a platform for earning sustainable livelihoods to economically deprived women and single bread winners residing in remote mountain communities in the Indian Himalayan Region.

Gita Mehta's life journey has been unique in some ways than most around her. Challenged with the responsibility of being a single bread earner, she has not only been able to create a space for herself but has also been able to help others in their journey. Pushpa, a young girl who was locked in a bad marriage walked out of it. Gita extended a helping hand and opened up her home for Pushpa. Together they manage a tailoring unit today which is the main source of income not only for themselves but for five other women. Gita is one of the members of Umang Board of Directors.

> **Expose women to training and education, it is bound to have ripple effect because trade is better than aid.**

Such women-led initiatives are also looking at other issues in their communities as they well realize the inter connectedness of issues and multi-dimensional approaches to sustainability. For us, sustainability is a long-term solution to the problems of the women farmers, explains Indira Kabadwal. She and others in her community started to work towards renewal of hydrology in their river basin in order to address food security issues. The development of Self Help Groups of women in her area has led to the creation of a dynamic basin-level federation leading to inter and intra basin dialogue with other stakeholders. Women take the lead in this federation for renewal of the hydrological cycle through promotion of community forestry, water conservation initiatives and adoption of appropriate technologies in order to have positive impacts on their lives in a sustainable manner. Indira is also one of the Directors of Mahila Umang Producers Company. Guided by such concerns of ecology, economics and equity Umang has been able to innovate, incubate and grow.

have all the fun?

Such models of women's collectives and small entrepreneurial ventures have led to significant economic empowerment as a result of civil society engagement in addressing gender equality. Financial independence leading to enhanced self-esteem has also impacted family and community perceptions. Motto of all such initiatives has been that - Together we can do it. By providing an enabling ecosystem where care and support to each other is the guiding principle.

India has also been focusing on the agenda of inclusive growth and gender equity in all its development plans. While much has been achieved in the past couple of decades, gender gap in different spheres of society and economy still persists which prevents women from getting a fair share in political, economic and other social spaces. This gap severely impacts livelihoods and unless livelihoods are secure, women are not able to contribute to the wider development agenda to their full potential. Role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and community

Increased participation of women in the global labor force has led to achieving economic independence.

development professionals for achieving the 2030 agenda is well appreciated and in reality CSOs have been providing the blueprints, by leading the way for achieving and establishing equitable societies based on justice and inclusive growth for all.

Microfinance sector and Self Help Group movement based on appropriate gender strategies is a good example of contribution from the social entrepreneurship sector. In recent times, promotion of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) is being viewed as a mechanism for enabling small and marginal farmers to access markets effectively and get a better share of the

consumer rupee. From being a topic of discussion and grassroots engagement by civil society organisations a decade ago, FPO has become the new buzzword for the coming years due to a shift of viewing agriculture as a value–led enterprise. Based on the spirit of a cooperative with the operational flexibility of a private company, FPOs are emerging as an alternative to state sponsored coops.

Corporate India is also talking of the need for formation of entrepreneurship clusters in rural India. States are also talking and taking steps in formation of state level FPO policy. Various awards are also being instituted to acknowledge FPOs and social entrepreneurship.

Increased participation of women in the global labor force has led to achieving economic independence. Rising rates of female education along with the desire to be able to take matters in their own hands for guiding their destinies, declining fertility rates and inclusion of gender strategies in the policy and

governance frameworks are some factors that have enabled such changes.

In India microenterprises contribute 30-40% of our national income. Of these only 20-30 % are owned and operated by women entrepreneurs. There has been a shift from traditional jam, jelly and embroidery clusters to other non- conventional skills and product lines. However, recent surveys reveal that rural women participation in the labour force has actually reduced to 15 % today from 23% over a decade ago which is a major area of concern.

Agriculture with its allied sectors still continues to be the major source of employment and women provide the critical work force and yet continue to remain invisible from the government policy frameworks. With no assets in her name she gets categorized as cultivator and not as a farmer which is based on ownership of land as a criterion to be considered as a famer and thereby, be able to access government sponsored schemes and benefits.

This coupled with patriarchal systems of inheritance which restricts entitlements,

women continue to find themselves struggling for their rights to find their rightful place in the economy of the country. Being the major care providers along with other domestic and care responsibilities inhibits their performance in the labor and other leadership roles.

Lobbying for change in the restrictive cultural and legal frameworks, demanding equal and fair wages, improvements in infrastructure to promote women's mobility and safety, legislations that recognize women in agriculture as workers entitled to social protection are some areas that organizations such as Umang in collaboration with other like- minded movements are working for influencing positive changes.

Eight cross cutting themes of community development, in terms of engaging and empowering communities to collaborate for change, as per their perceived needs, through participative processes has enabled the formation of Umang as a democratic institution, which in turn forms the bed rock for ushering in sustainable change. Building

leadership is also perceived as a continuous process for securing inter-generational justice. Finally, through growth of effective collaborations and sharing knowledge, self-help groups of women have been able to reach out to larger audiences and in turn has also been able to strengthen their own systems of grassroots management, governance and growth. Many such voices and experiments will certainly lead to Gender Inclusive Sustainable Development, however, accelerating the pace of such change remains a challenge.

Anita Paul is a community development professional and has been a practitioner for over three decades. She has been instrumental in the formation Of Umang and is passionate about participatory grassroots development. She believes in holistic strategies for ensuring gender inclusive growth. Mountain eco-systems is her chosen area of work.

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Actions for Gender and Social Change in Brick Sector of Nepal

Kamala Gurung, Arabinda Mishra, Sugat Bajracharya, and Luja Mathema

Background

Brick production is categorized as informal sector in Nepal and is highly labour intensive. Around 3,00,000 male and female workers in Nepal are estimated to be engaged in production in 2019 , of which 46% are women with most of the work force comprising of seasonal migrants from marginalized and highly vulnerable social groups. This informal sector is largely operated with unorganized and unskilled male and female workers who are not supported by any form of social protection. As the brick sector grows, so does its responsibility towards improving the living and working conditions for its workforce.

> *The strategic approach of this project is linking brick productivity gains and efficiency with improving working and living conditions of both women and men working in the factory.*

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in partnership with Federation of Nepal Brick Industries (FNBI) is jointly implementing a project to include gender perspectives in the informal brick making industry which has a huge proportion of women in their work force.
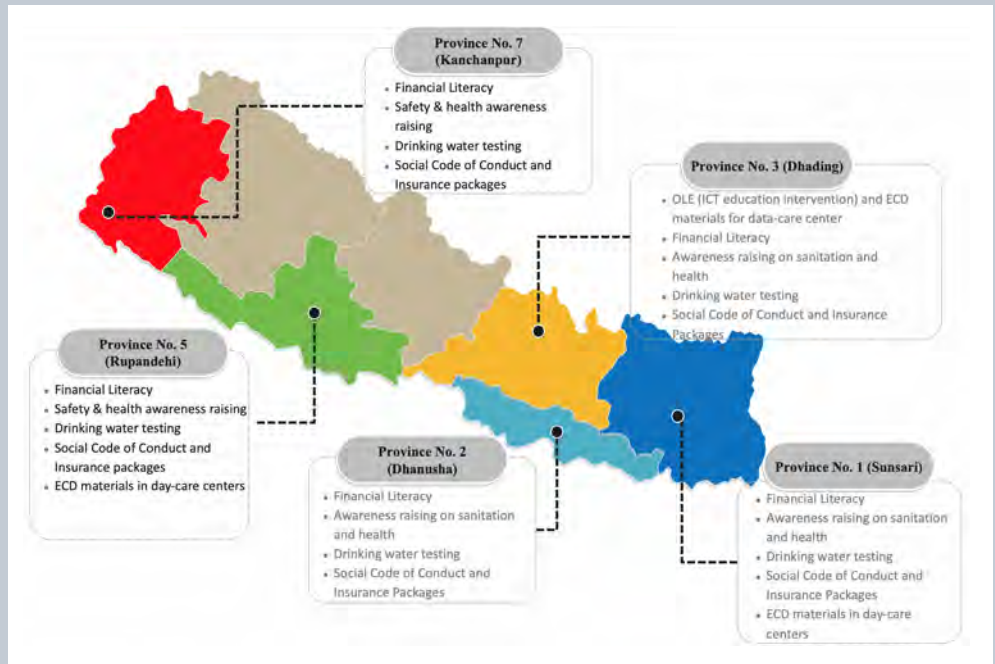
The strategic approach of this project is linking brick productivity gains and efficiency with improving working and living conditions of both women and men working in the factory. This approach is directly linked to mitigation of negative impacts with a human face which complements promoting energy

Figure 1: Package of interventions were implemented across the provinces

Figure 1: Package of interventions were implemented across the provinces

> *The Initiative has pinpointed gender-focused and cost-effective options towards more socially responsible brick production in Nepal.*

efficient technology in the brick sector. Going forward, this is a model for achieving *"emissions mitigation with the human face"*.

To guide the way forward, project conducted a rapid gender need assessment (RGNA) and political economy analysis across five provinces in Nepal. Findings from these studies have guided an action research design in three priority areas: health insurance, education for workers' children and workplace safety particularly for women workers.

Long-term visit The socioeconomic outcomes resulting from the action

research are expected to help rebrand the sector and present the brick sector to policy makers as socially responsible and lucrative for all involved. The Initiative has pinpointed gender-focused and cost-effective options towards more socially responsible brick production in Nepal. It is expected that these learnings will be scaled up as best practices across the Hindu Kush Himalayan region through a common platform –the Federation of South Asia Brick Kiln Association (FABKA). FABKA has initiated some knowledge sharing mechanisms based on the experiences of this project.

Strategic Package of Interventions was developed which is detailed below and Figure 1 shows the package of interventions that was carried out in seven selected kilns across Nepal.

Social Code of Conduct (CoC): The draft Social CoC has been prepared in accordance with the Government of Nepal's Labour Act, Occupational Safety and Health Directive for Brick Industry and Child Labour Act. The

newly developed Social CoC addresses the gaps and limitations in the current labour Acts and Directives for the brick sector, in which some clauses and indicators are not practical and feasible. The social code of conduct aims to; i) provide a mechanism for brick entrepreneurs association to take a common shared responsibility to improve the working and living conditions of male and female workers along with their children living in the kilns; ii) to create a foundation to engage and discuss brick male and female workers issues with policy makers. This is a landmark chapter as it is for the first time that the umbrella body has taken a lead in inclusion of social dimensions of the brick factories in Nepal. The Social CoC document is comprised of 20 domains under four core principles focusing on, effective end of child labour, transparency in employment conditions, basic facilities in workplace and safety for women workers.

Consultation meetings for insurance packages: Simultaneously, discussions with insurance companies were also initiated to provide personal accident and medical insurance for the male and female workers and also to address brick raw materials insurance to hedge against unpredictable climate disasters in order to secure incomes of brick workers.

ICT based education program as action research intervention: In order to address disruption in children's schooling

due to seasonal migration of parents, ICT enabled facilities were established in one school where majority of the children enrolled were children of brick kiln workers. Exposure to technology at such young age is sure to open a world of opportunity for these otherwise deprived children.

The newly developed Social CoC addresses the gaps and limitations in the current labour Acts and Directives for the brick sector.

Financial literacy training: The financial literacy training was organized to raise awareness of male and female workers and improve their financial literacy in selective brick kilns. The financial literacy training need arose during the rapid gender need assessment (RGNA) from the brick entrepreneurs as well as the workers. The financial literacy awareness program helped them to gain knowledge and bring about improvements in their spending behaviors. The training highlighted the income and expenditure pattern of the workers and identifying the ways to reduce the expenses. Financial education training taught individuals how to weigh the risks and make more responsible choices. These trainings had a special focus on married couples and also on young male and female workers.

As part of the awareness program suitable training materials and documents were prepared in local language for knowledge sharing with other stakeholders.

What are the outcomes of work?

Brick workers face numerous vulnerabilities and without any form of social protection, women workers are subject to widespread discrimination and face insecurities. The project is working to help stakeholders particularly FNBI to overcome these challenges in order to augur an environment of dignity for women workers in brick factories. So far, the project has achieved a vital breakthrough in developing an understanding with brick entrepreneurs regarding social and gender aspects of production being as important as adoption of efficient technologies. Brick factory owners understand better now that ethical labour management and cleaner production is not only necessary for their continued existence, but can also be profitable and feasible provided some key changes are made to current practices. To address this, as stated above the Social Code of Conduct prepared for the brick sector in Nepal, focuses on the importance of safe workplace for women workers. Women workers have also developed an understanding of health and safety implications of the brick production which has in turn enabled them to take measures to safeguard themselves and their families.

Simultaneously, discussions with insurance companies were also initiated to provide personal accident and medical insurance for the male and female workers.

The brick sector contributes 20% of total worldwide black carbon emissions, and brick production is a major industry in South Asia. Yet, the informal and unregulated nature of the industry means that the sector is largely perceived as highly exploitative,

> *Brick factory owners understand better now that ethical labour management and cleaner production is not only necessary for their continued existence, but can also be profitable and feasible provided some key changes are made to current practices.*

especially for women and the socially deprived. The gender and social equity outputs resulting from the action research is expected to help further in rebranding the sector as a socially responsible sector which is able to deliver higher returns for all involved. Therefore, by lowering emissions of black carbon and integrating socio-economic aspects of production, ICIMOD seeks to transform the brick sector into a healthier, socially responsible and profitable industry.

Organisation Profile: ICIMOD: The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development is a regional intergovernmental learning and knowledge sharing centre serving the eight regional member countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and India) of the Hindu Kush Himalayas.

Dr. Kamala Gurung is a "Gender and Natural Resource Management Specialist" in Livelihoods Theme at ICIMOD who works with resource poor communities and governments of South Asia.

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Ms. Luja Mathema worked at ICIMOD as a Gender Associate for the Clean Brick Initiative.

"In a time lacking in truth and certainty and filled with anguish and despair, no woman should be shamefaced in attempting to give back to the world, a portion of its lost heart."

Louise Bogan

Women Rising

By Michelle Dunscombe and Kate Riddell

The past few months in Australia have been challenging for many communities in the path of the fires and it's not the first time. Based on the personal reflection from Michelle Dunscombe, she is joined by Kate Riddell of Kinglake, Australia as they share their reflections and experiences, as Firefoxes members, from Australia's Black Saturday fires in 2009 and highlight the strength of women before, during and after disasters.

> **Communities need to be part in any planning processes undertaken by local government.**

At the time of Black Saturday, we were caught under-prepared, had limited communication and didn't really know what would assist our town to recover. The bushfires raised a large number of leadership issues. Agencies had never responded in a combined effort of this magnitude and complexity. There was 'behind the scenes' political manoeuvring that the public will never be privy to which had far reaching implications in the lives of thousands of people. There has been huge growth in the area of emergency response and recovery since 2009, valuable lessons learnt, research completed, necessary documentation and implementation of systems and processes and much more.

One leadership question to emerge from our experience is: '**How can we better work with communities to prepare for and respond to disasters?''**

Peter Kenyon, an Australian ABCD practitioner says "We are trained to ask "What's wrong and how do we fix it ?". And that is precisely what Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd did when he drove into Kinglake soon after the fires and proudly announced, "We will rebuild this town brick by brick".

Instead, we should start by asking - "What works, what have we got, what's possible and who cares?"' What our then Prime Minister could have said is "Not only will we rebuild this town brick by brick, but also person, by person (utilizing our best leaders and all our resources!)'. For it matters not what infrastructure we have, if there is nobody left to utilize it!

So, what works, what have we got, what's possible and who cares?

> **Governments often impose their own agendas which may not be in sync with or distract from community priorities.**

Without a doubt we need to ensure that before and after an emergency, the planning and recovery is community driven, inclusive and transparent. Communities need to be part in any planning processes undertaken by local government in developing Emergency Management and Recovery Plans – why produce plans in isolation of the residents who will be/are affected? It doesn't make sense. During an event we need to ensure that government, emergency services and the local community work together, share information and meet at the table as equals.

There is no denying that communities require assistance to plan for a disaster and in recovery. Local government, government agencies and local (place-based) organisations require adequate training and funding to support strong community engagement to plan for local disasters.

After a natural disaster aid agencies and government departments are usually the first to step in to disaster affected communities. However, their top down, lengthy and non- transparent processes makes them less effective in the recovery processes. Governments often impose their own agendas which may not be in sync with or distract from community priorities and often do not value the existing community strengths, which then acts as a barrier for their active engagement in the future. Whether it is before, during or after a disaster, there is a tendency to **'do to'** rather than **'do with'**.

Government can't address all the needs of a traumatised community in isolation. Governments are better served recognizing that their communities have untapped resources as well as unmet needs. Jim Diers of Design Institute for Emergency Relief Systems reflects, "Building true partnerships between government and community isn't easy. Before they can empower the community, agencies must first cease the harm that they inflict on the community and begin removing their own obstacles to engagement".

Local residents who understand local needs often have more creative, holistic and appropriate solutions. By empowering and partnering with communities, Governments not only address their own human resource inadequacies, but also through partnerships better address increasingly complex, newly emerging social and environmental issues.

> **Local residents who understand local needs often have more creative, holistic and appropriate solutions.**

In the months, after the fires, the women in our community exhibited exceptional strength and resilience, keeping families together, supporting communities and advocating for resources. So much good was happening and women certainly led the way. Supporting women to step up into leadership roles is extremely important from our local emergency services through to participating in local government Emergency Management Planning committees.

> **Supporting women to step up into leadership roles is extremely important.**

In our community, women formed a group called Firefoxes which aimed to encourage disaster affected women to create a 'new normal' and realise their dreams. Firefoxes met regularly for meals, special events and time away. We skied, rode horses, cooked, went to the theatre, listened to guest speakers, ran leadership retreats, indulged in chocolate therapy and much more. Whilst every gathering was different, the messages around resilience, validity and connectedness were fundamentally the same. Together we laughed, shared, supported, indulged, reflected, listened, motivated, educated, empowered and inspired.

By addressing barriers for active engagement of women we were able to enlist their participation to engage in leadership roles and their voices enriched the processes. In over 10 years, we have worked with over 6000 members of disaster affected communities across Australia, resulting in improved mental health outcomes, reduced isolation, increased morale and positive networks.

Firefoxes Australia in conjunction with Black Saturday survivors, filmmaker Helen Newman and the Victorian Women's Trust, created a documentary "Creating a New Normal". Creating a New Normal shares, the extraordinary story of Firefoxes women as they try to

> **In over 10 years, we have worked with over 6000 members of disaster affected communities across Australia**

rebuild their community from a grassroots level. It's a story of passion, vision, hope, love and leadership.

Other women from fire affected communities were also doing incredible things including being involved in developing a community leadership program to support development of community leaders to better cope with future events. Rivers and Ranges Community Leadership Program was born as a result of such endeavours, with a vision of "developing leadership to build resilient, connected and thriving communities."

With these things in mind, we must ask **'How can communities be empowered to reach their potential and their voices be heard authentically, before, during and after a disaster event'?**

Michelle Dunscombe is community development practitioner and consultant with Jeder Institute in Australia and one of IACD's Country Correspondents in Australia

Michelle Dunscombe is from Kinglake, Victoria, Australia and spent many years building local community capacity after the 2009 Victorian bushfires. She is a practitioner and trainer who is skilled in strengthening communities and supporting people to take action. Michelle is a member of the Jeder Institute, co-facilitator of the ABCD Asia Pacific Network and an IACD Country Correspondent.

Kate Riddell is a Mum, teacher, past emergency services volunteer and Kinglake Ranges resident. She co-founded Firefoxes Australia and was awarded the Pride of Australia medal, Minister for Health Volunteer Award, Ambulance Victoria Leadership Excellence Award, the National Emergency Medal and travelled to the US on an Emergency Services Scholarship researching Mental Health training for First Responders.

Women in Communities:
Stories from the Field

Dee Brooks, Director, Jeder Institute featuring South African story by Bernie Dolley, Director, Ikhala Trust; Teresa Opperman, Project Leader, Hugs of Hope; New Zealand story by Denise Bijoux, Founder, Catalyse

The power of women in community-led, place-based practice and initiatives around the world can be seen in the stories from asset-based community-led development (ABCD) inspired stories presented below.

A Story of HOPE and RESILIENCE by Bernie Dolley and Teresa Opperman

"If you want to go fast, travel alone; if you want to go far, travel together"
- African Proverb

This is the story of transforming the small rural town of Hofmeyr, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Hofmeyr is a small Karoo town in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, 20 km west of the Bamboesberg mountain range with a population of about 326 persons and was formerly the centre of a flourishing sheep-farming district.

> *The power of women in community-led, place-based practice and initiatives*

For the past 7 years or more, this town and many other farming communities like this have been experiencing extreme drought conditions and many of the successful sheep and cattle farmers have had to resort to finding alternative ways of generating an income and keeping their towns alive.

Teresa Opperman, a local farmer's wife, decided that unless they roll up their sleeves and do something about their situation, they could not rely on outsiders to come in and rescue them as their pleas were falling on deaf ears.

Teresa rallied other farmers' wives and together, they decided that instead of burying their heads in the sand, they would do a human skills inventory to see what they already had, that they could use, to

Sustainable Development Goal #5 states, "Women and girls, everywhere, must have equal rights and opportunity, and be able to live free of violence and discrimination. Women's equality and empowerment is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, but also integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development**. In short, all the SDGs depend on the achievement of Goal 5."**

By creating the conditions for women to more fully participate in community and offer their diverse skills, passions and abilities, we not only address equal rights and address discrimination, we can also exponentially increase the opportunities for women, and their families, to make meaningful connections, share in the local economy and ultimately thrive, for the benefit of all.

revive their little town and instill HOPE and CARE once again.

The women were amazed at what they uncovered! They had so many gifts and talents that they could put to use immediately to generate some income for themselves and the local community. These skills included dressmaking, crocheting, knitting, leatherworks, baking and cooking skills and other arts and crafts skills.

They now have a flourishing home-industry and travel to other towns to market their goods. They went from a mere 10 friends on their Facebook page to where they now have more than 1000 friends who support them by buying their products and produce, and market them to others, and by donating goods.

Teresa is now a woman on a mission and she fires up and motivates everyone she meets. She is a beacon of hope to many other women in similar rural towns who are facing a similar situation and she inspires all of us with her energy, passion, integrity, hard work, tenacity and COURAGE.

Teresa's story is now also inspiring others in our Province to use what they have to change the course of their lives and communities and it all started with a little bit of hope and a whole lot of resilience from women!

Using what we have to get what we need: Morningside Urban Market Garden by Denise Bijoux

This is a story about building on skills and talents women already have to generate purposeful work, income and social connection.

Getting paid work in Aotearoa, New Zealand is often difficult for migrant and refugee women due to language difficulties, cultural differences and unrecognised training and inadequate formal education. Women also do the greater share of childcare and other household duties. All these factors limit their abilities to engage in sustainable economic activities, engaging and contributing to the development of their local communities.

However, everyone has gifts and talents to offer such as, experience in growing and selling food produce. Morningside Urban Market Garden (MUMG) is a social

Some now lead different aspects of the operation and several are already applying the skills they have learned to their own gardening enterprises.

enterprise co created by interested volunteers and local groups that builds on these skills and develops them by growing edible flowers and microgreens for use in local cafes that are crying out for promoting local foods as a response to global climate concerns. Profits are shared equitably with participating women and the prime aim is to develop local entrepreneurship.

MUMG focuses on edible flowers and microgreens because they are high value, fast growing crops with reliably good yields and they can be grown on a small scale and with low capital investments on infrastructure. Home based operations are possible which can then be scaled as per their needs.

Presence of MUMG as an assured buyer in the local market buying their produce at fair rates is an enabling factor for success of these entrepreneurs.

First group of women entrepreneurs from Rwanda, Burundi, Afghanistan, Uganda and The Congo have engaged in this enterprise and benefitted not just by earning supplementary incomes but more importantly they now feel more confident due to other valuable inputs they received such as, feedback, songs and dances, sharing rides, food and having general fun. In a short span of a year, their dependence on interpreters has reduced in conversing with each other, members of the public, reporters and camera crews as well as chefs and café staff. Some now lead different aspects of the operation and several are already applying the skills they have learned to their own gardening enterprises. Two have developed a small composting business as well. They now have meaningful work with adequate skills and knowledge leading to enhanced confidence and an increase in the respect within their local communities. They are most definitely the experts.

And this is only the beginning!

MUMG is achieving some other goals too. One of these is to contribute to innovative development of local public spaces by producing food. We currently have two sites, both available to us at no cost - one at a disused bowling green in a public park at Gribblehirst Community Hub and the other on part of the tar sealed car park at Eden Park Stadium. At both sites, infrastructure (such as water harvesting) contributes to the improved

resilience of the wider community and, led by the participating women, workshops on organic growing practices, wicking beds in repurposed apple crates and harvest demonstrations and celebrations all contribute to the regeneration of local neighbourhoods too.

> *The glue that unites us across the world is the stories of collective action*

In 2020, the women will mentor a second group into the MUMG programme and then that group will mentor a third group, and so on. There are also a range of wholesale and retail opportunities emerging. Building on existing gifts and talents makes a huge difference, not only to those with the gifts and talents but to the wider community they are in and, through the SDGs, the world.

See more here: https://www.facebook.com/MUMG.AKL and http://localprojectchallenge.org/morningside-urban-market-garden/

The glue that unites us across the world is the stories of collective action, from women in communities, who increase community participation by lifting their local economy into a strong future, based on local skills, abilities, passions and strengths.

This is the key to achieving further success for the Sustainable Development Goal #5!

Dee Brooks, Director, Jeder Institute, Australia is a mum of 4 adults and a passionate community development practitioner and trainer with over 20 years of experience. Dee has been an Intentional Nomad since 2015 and has travelled and worked in over 20 countries creating impact through capacity building and knowledge sharing. http://jeder.com.au

Bernie Dolley, Founding Director, Ikhala Trust, South Africa has over 30 years experience in the NFP sector. Bernie participated, by invitation, in the New School for Social Research programme in New York and returned for the Senior Fellows Programme for Philanthropy at CUNY University. Bernie travels extensively sharing her experience and passion of asset based community driven development (ABCD). https://ikhala.org.za

Denise Bijoux, Network Director, Catalyse, New Zealand works in 'ako ako' ways (we are all teachers and learners) alongside community groups, businesses, NFP organisations and government to accelerate positive change. She co-authored a book on locally led change called Learning by Doing and was the Founding Chair at Gribblehirst Community Hub. Denise's work contributes to place based, people-centred regeneration through participatory community building. http://www.catalyse.co.nz/#

Community Building can be Mum-Sized; **small is the new big!**

April Doner and Dee Brooks

Becoming a mother can be rewarding, love-filled, complex and also exhausting and isolating, at times. In a hectic, shrinking world, it can be difficult for mothers to find the time to connect outside of the role of primary care-giver and nurturer yet, it is well documented that the antidote to loneliness is connection.

So, how can busy mothers connect? What does it look like as part of our day to day routine? How can we maintain connection with others without it feeling like another chore?

The following reflections and experiences are from 2 mothers from different generations and countries (hence the "mum" and "mom" and alternative spelling of "neighbour") who are both asset-based community-led development (ABCD) practitioners and passionate connectors.

Motherhood from a bird's eye view:

• Mothers are often an isolated group, particularly when the children are young

• Some cultures have a stronger, more active sense of "village" around a mother

• Western, individualist culture can be counter-intuitive in supporting a mother's needs

• There is a link between postpartum depression and individualistic culture

• Mothers often feel a taboo against asking for practical help

• Parenting burn out is real and can be debilitating

For many mothers, there are barriers to participation in their hectic schedules like knowing where to start, lack of motivation, personal mental health, feeling alone or isolated, childcare restrictions and more. Alternatively, there are also many opportunities to connect through work, school, sports and other extra - curricular activities and on a larger scale; local issues, activism, topic specific activities and more.

Reframing barriers as opportunities!

By creating some of the following smaller connections and actions, you can learn who the "connectors" are and discover where you can offer your own skills and abilities in a meaningful way.

I haven't got time!

• Make it fun, find like-minded individuals/ families, gathering with others around food and having a party is as important as protesting a local issue

• Integrate your community building actions into your existing routine like, picking up rubbish in the local park with your kids before play, joining annual community events, hosting or participating in an online group in your area

> *it is well documented that the antidote to loneliness is connection.*

• Find new connections through little actions like getting out of the house to take walks, frequent your local grocery / cafe / coffee shop and be open to meeting people

I don't have anything to offer!

• Know what you care about or are looking for and "put out your antenna" when having conversations or noticing things in your community

• Lead with your and your families' gifts and strengths, don't commit to something you don't have an interest in or passion in, discover where you can activate or offer your skills and abilities

I'm tired!

• A mother's health is paramount to successful community life; don't burn out by saying yes to "everything"

• Balance your time between needing time alone and being active in community

• Make your actions part of the family routine and don't act alone

I don't know how!

• Even if you don't know a "connector" to help you find others, you can take the initiative and find little ways to connect that can grow into bigger things and a "web" or "nest" of connection.

- Work the idea of "building relationships" into your family traditions like making crafts or candy for friends & neighbors.

- Apply community building tools like asset-mapping into events like a baby shower to tighten your community of friends, family and neighbors

- Ask people what they would like to offer to help "grow" community in your life

- Ask your neighbors questions like, "who knows everyone and everything that's going on in our community".

Don't beat yourself up!

If you are feeling isolated, frustrated or overwhelmed, remember that an individualistic culture isn't mom-friendly, and feeling this way is normal! Take heart that every little effort you make to be more in community is restoring a collective culture and you can help others build the connection they are craving just as much as you are.

Most importantly, know that the gift of community and being in community is one of the best things you can give your child and, in turn, you give your

community the wonderful gift of knowing your child and watching/helping them grow!

Mum messages for community builders/the field:

- When you're building community, don't forget about the parents. It takes extra thoughtfulness to connect to them and have things Moms can attend or take leadership in -- things like providing day- care and food if it's a meeting, having meals or parties instead of meetings, or designing things with moms with an eye to everything being "Mom-sized."

> *Ask your neighbors questions like, "who knows everyone and everything that's going on in our community".*

- There are Mom-Connectors in every neighbourhood and community - including grandmothers! They are either already "mothering" their neighbourhoods or would be willing to do so if asked

- Look for the homes with many young people hanging around outside or the Mom, Auntie or Grandma that young ones know to go to for advice

- Acknowledge and honour a mom's gifts and assets - many stay-at-home Moms have "side-hustles" where they are making income via their talents... or, might be interested in doing so!

- Moms in general are incredibly pragmatic and great organizers, and also often very attuned to what real priorities of a neighbourhood are regarding the health and happiness of its members

- When institutions or organisations do things which build in community-building activities for mums, it can make a huge difference to their participation

Community building tools for mums and organisations:

Some of the tools, techniques and strategies that we have found useful when working alongside community member's capacity building efforts are:

- Asset Mapping

- Learning Conversations

- Circles of Support (developed by Independent Living Movement)

The ABCD focus on neighbourhoods is valuable and accessible to moms. Packing kids in and out of cars can be exhausting and daunting whereas, knowing and doing things with neighbours makes things easier when life is already SO full and demanding. A feeling of care close-at-hand, security, and embedded-ness is key to mental health and not feeling alone which is so needed when little ones are dependent on you!

In summary, women are more likely to be locally involved in multiple activities that can lead to new, warm, deepened, relationships with others. Mothers are in the perfect position to be connectors although, sometimes a new mother, who has been solely focused on the safe entry and nurturing of a newborn in the world will need a connector herself. Being mindful of who is in your neighbourhood is just as important as being mindful of your own efforts and remember to lift other women, don't put them down, praise their actions and celebrate the successes together!

April is a mother of one from Sarasota, Florida, USA. April is an artist and community connector at heart. Her greatest joy is exploring neighbourhoods to discover the strengths and good work of people who live there, and sharing these discoveries through her writing and photography and hosting asset-based learning experiences with others.

Dee is a mother of 4 adult children, a global nomad, based in Australia who worked full time at a university, part time at a youth centre in the evenings, studied via correspondence and still cooked, cleaned, shopped, fixed and taxied her way through child rearing. Dee is currently the co-founder of the Jeder Institute who provide ABCD training and consultancy worldwide.

Re-evaluating gendered, Western conceptualizations of 'leadership' in international development: **A commentary article**

Caitlin G. Bletscher, PhD & Jera Elizondo Niewoehner-Green

Increasing women's leadership has been part of many development efforts and cited as a means to increase empowerment and equity (IFAD, 2012; The Hunger Project, n.d.; USAID, 2015). As we celebrate the advancements of women around the globe, one cannot argue that these successes are largely in part due to women leaders acting in spaces from a village council to a country's political arena. However, the term leadership is a loaded one, with connotations of power and position that has been influenced not only by colonial history, but also neoliberalism ideology. Both scholars and practitioners seeking to promote women's leadership through development efforts must attend to these historical and ideological influences, calling into question their own assumptions around leadership. Approaching women's leadership development calls for deconstructing leadership and acknowledging it in its many forms.

Shifting Theories, Enduring Ideologies

To begin to understand widely recognized conceptualizations of leadership, one must acknowledge how individuals became 'leaders,' as well as who has been allowed to do so. Transitions in society have provided insights into how humans have organized themselves, from mutually beneficial relationships between leaders and group members to hierarchical structures with concentrated power of local formalized leaders (Price & eVan Vugt, 2014). Social stratification not only occurred between leaders with more wealth and power and their followers but also through the sexual division of labor. With increased economic reliance on the agriculture, men's labor in the fields and markets became more important (Richerson, Mulder & Vila, 2001) Thus, moving the productive roles of men

and women, from parallel, to that of the subservience of women labor centered in the domestic and familial spheres (Richerson, Mulder & Vila, 2001). Both leadership and "productive" labor were primarily men's domain and although thousands of years have passed, these patterns still endure across the globe.

> **The term leadership is a loaded one, with connotations of power and position.**

When considering the ways in which leadership has enacted and studied, the context, that of Western, male-dominated organizations, also must be considered. Formalized research began at the turn of the 20th century with the "great man" or trait perspective, in which leadership was perceived as the internal, innate qualities of a person that distinguished him from followers (Antonakis, Cianciolo & Sternberg, 2003) That is, individuals are born leaders, not developed, and successful leadership was realized through their influence in roles of authority. This trait movement gave way to examining the distinct behaviors of leaders that created productivity, effectiveness, and success within their organizations, emphasizing tasks, positions of power, and leader-follower relations (Fiedler, 1967; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Later, organizational culture and context became considerations, as well as a more humanizing approach that attended to both goal attainment and social advancement (Schein, 1985; Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 2010; Dugan, 2017). More recently still, collective processes wherein leaders must work collaboratively within their organizations and communities in

order to solve-problems and effect change have entered the leadership theory arena (Sweeney, Clarke, & Higgs, 2019).

Despite this expanded conceptualization of leadership in recent literature, the context of our knowledge about leadership is shaped by the cultural history of the West, with most studies, researchers, perspectives, and methods articulating American and Western-centric values (Collinson & Tourish, 2015). To critique these leadership concepts is to acknowledge the oppression and power differences that have evolved during and after colonization around the world, especially in the production of universally valid knowledge (Kincheloe, 2008). The assumption that those who were modernizing, developing, democratizing, and 'leading' knew what served the needs of colonized peoples better than those people themselves, set precedents for oppressive power relations that are still seen today.

> **Many times their influential community leadership has neither been acknowledged nor explicitly credited.**

Therefore, the authors beg to question: How much of this conceptualization do we, as Westerners, carry with us when thinking about women's leadership roles in development efforts? Ideas of successful leaders and leadership is ubiquitous; therefore, it becomes essential to note that much of this has been historically and culturally influenced by those in power, alongside the volumes of previous leadership scholarship. Unfortunately, this scholarship has widely and quite erroneously ignored power and gender.

Women's Leadership in International Development

Due to the diverse make-up of today's communities, scholars have asserted that leadership must include perspectives from different ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, genders, and cultures. Globalization has significantly impacted leadership theory, research, and practice and now, understanding worldwide environments, learning the perspectives of other systems, and engaging with cultural humility are considered necessary (Alder & Bartholomew, 1992; Javidan, Bullough, & Dibble, 2016).

> *Such essential roles (i.e., mother, caregiver, opinion leader) can be leadership within her community that may be different from the aforementioned*

Although helpful, global perspectives can still produce blind spots in conceptualizing leadership for women in international development by ignoring the sociopolitical, gendered context in which development efforts operate. Leadership for women is often framed in empowerment efforts. However, empowerment often ignores the gendered power relations in which women live and operate (Eerdewijk and Davids, 2014). Leadership for women is often framed within economic empowerment efforts, but can often ignore the aforementioned gendered power structures. Thus, opportunities for women to participate in a program or stand as a representative in a local government may be restricted due to domestic responsibilities or repercussions for breaking gender norms.

Although women have played essential roles in community development, security, and progress all around the world, many times their influential community leadership has neither been acknowledged nor explicitly credited (Hassan & Silong, 2008). A majority of the literature on global women leaders remains grounded in institutions and organizations ignoring the many spaces in which women lead that may not be formalized nor positional. This lack of acknowledgement of such essential means of influence perpetuates the Western lens of leadership, potentially dismissing the valuable work of women all around the world.

A Call for Change

The authors of this commentary argue, that leadership is intersectional and contextual; leadership is gendered, cultural, historical, and social. Even within communities, our organizations and institutions are gendered, impacting leadership development efforts at a multitude of levels (Hopkins, O'Neil, Passarelliu, & Bilimoria, 2008). When approaching leadership development and empowerment among women, community development researchers and practitioners must ensure that women's roles and identities are being acknowledged and valued within the wider scope of 'leadership.' Such essential roles (i.e., mother, caregiver, opinion leader) can be leadership within her community that may be different from the aforementioned Western, scholarly conceptualization of leadership.

For example, Datt and McIwaine (2000) conceptualized feminine leadership as heading households in Latin America and Southern Africa wherein empowering younger members of their household and those within their community served as a type of 'grassroots' influence. Metcalfe and Mutlaq (2011) explored feminine leadership in the Middle East, concluding that most previous literature presents only a partial understanding of the leadership process, drawn from Western, privileged, masculine perspectives. The complexity of women's leadership roles and practice comes from a place of building nurturing relationships with her family and community and partnerships with government, private institutions, international development agencies, and active women's organizations were necessary for successful leadership development frameworks in the Middle East.

> *The complexity of women's leadership roles and practice comes from a place of building nurturing relationships.*

Where women can practice leadership must also be considered. Spaces assumed to be spheres of influence, such as political action groups, may not automatically serve as positive places of practice. Rather, this influence must be developed over time through the collective action of women and adaptations within the social context. This was illustrated through Sharma and Sudarshan's (2010) study in Uttarakhand, India, where an inflexible system thwarted efforts to address gender concerns in local governance but women's groups offered space to articulate their views. On the other hand, spaces that may

> *The perpetuation of Western, patriarchal theorization of women 'leaders'*

not have formal leadership roles, such as churches, schools, or social groups, can provide women with opportunities to enact leadership and identify as leaders (Niewoehner-Green et al., 2019). Unfortunately, in many instances, foreign development organizations have not acknowledged and perhaps undervalued such types of leadership spaces.

It has been argued that leadership development must be unique and different for women, tailored to their specific needs (Hopkins, O'Neil, Passarelliu, & Bilimoria, 2008); however, the empirical research and international case studies that address 'leadership' in the cultural conceptualization, context, and perspective of international women is significantly limited. This commentary calls for researchers to address this significant gap, raising the importance of addressing the conceptualization of gender and leadership among international development. Addressing structural issues that sustain gender inequality takes work at multiple levels, from policy creation and monitoring to programs supporting economic and social well-being. In addition, the authors note that education and training of men is essential for alleviating gender inequality, as it cannot just be initiatives from the top-down or women alone pushing for equal rights and opportunities. Along with establishing women's groups, men's groups can also be created to provide a space to discuss gender and leadership.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the authors call upon community development practitioners and researchers to cease the perpetuation of Western, patriarchal theorization of women 'leaders' in their programming and practice. Instead, let us first draw inward for critical introspective reflection on our own paradigms of leadership, before attempting to 'empower' others with Western ideologies of influence, possibly perpetuating marginalization and oppression within the international communities with which we work.

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1. Theoretical perspectives in community development

2. Community Development Practice - change and transformation

3. Community Empowerment Frameworks

4. Human rights, social protection and social inclusion

5. Role of stakeholders in community transformation

6. Community development standards and ethics

7. Gender and community development

8. Sustainable development goals and community development

9. Community development training and education

10. Community development within vulnerability contexts

11. Social risk management and community development

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Dear IACD,

I am a passionate photographer with an eye for details and I have four years' experience in photography with my different interests in documentary and portrait photography. In my current role as a student who is studying Art in Tehran, Iran, I am trying to enjoy the challenge of bringing opinions about my country, the old culture, my people, and emphasizing on women and girls in their life especially at the level of global societies.

I would like to share my photographs with other girls at the international level. It also inspires me to do more professional photography because it makes me a skilled individual in many areas of life.

My parents always respect my passions and interests and they are certain that engagement in community works supports all girls in other nations. I look forward to seeing the IACD connects all girls and intercontinental students on a universal level to know about their communities, particularly in social media.

Thank you.

Viyana Ansari, 16, Tehran, Iran

Notes

Notes

Issue 1: Poverty and Community Development — *Autumn 2012*

Issue 2: Community Empowerment — *Spring 2013*

Issue 3: Community Resilience — *Winter 2014*

Issue 4: Community is the answer

Issue 5 2016

Issue 6 — Sustainable Development Goals

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