Changing Their World

Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements

By Srilatha Batliwala
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Building
Feminist
Movements and
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Introduction

The Building Feminist Movements and Organizations Initiative was launched by AWID as part of its 2006 strategic plan. The aim of the initiative is to advance our understanding of feminist movements in the current global context, and to apply that understanding to strengthening the capacity of women's organizations to better catalyze, support, and sustain movement building.

In order to work toward this goal, we realized that two steps were essential:

1. Clarifying our concept of movements, and especially of feminist movements. This is critical at a time when the term "movement" is used to describe virtually any collection of organizations, or any joint activity. What actually distinguishes movements? What is the difference between an organization and a movement? What are their respective roles and relationships? What distinguishes feminist movements from other social movements? These questions were addressed and clarified in the paper "Clarifying Our Concepts", which is the first chapter in this document.

2. Second, we felt it was important to analyze the experiences of strong and vibrant women's movements in different parts of the world, and understand how they evolved, strategized, and made an impact. We also wanted to explore the meaning and essence of feminist practice in movement building, what feminist movements actually look like and how they act on the ground. This analysis, it is hoped, will help us create a new conceptual framework that explicitly links organizational strengthening processes to movement building, from a feminist perspective.

AWID's BFEMO initiative therefore undertook a series of 10 case studies[1] from different regions of the world that had mobilized women to make a difference. We used AWID's membership network to identify movements that would fulfil these criteria:

- Geographic spread (at least one movement from every major region)
- Thematic diversity (movements focusing on varied issues and interests of women)
- Diversity of women – movements that have been built by women of different identities
- Age – movements that were in existence for at least five years

The case studies were undertaken by researchers identified by AWID's BFEMO team and our advisors in different regions. A case guideline was developed to broadly obtain comparative data on the origins, structures, strategies and impacts of the movements. The studies were conducted and documented between July 2007 and February 2008. Chapter Two presents brief summaries of the case studies, highlighting their origins, political goals, key strategies, organizational structures, and achievements. The complete case studies are available on the Forum CD, and may also be downloaded from www.awid.org.

The third chapter, "Lessons to Learn", presents a preliminary set of insights emerging from the rich harvest of information in the cases, organized in eight broad areas:

1) Overarching insights from the cases
2) Factors constraining or fragmenting movements

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1. This is by no means an exhaustive or fully representative list of current women's movements. It is simply an initial effort to document an interesting variety of movement experiences.

3) How movements originate

4) The evolutionary pathways of movements

5) Some relationship patterns between organizations and movements

6) Their strategies

7) Their structures and governance

8) Their influence and / or achievements so far

Some of the lessons affirm what we already knew about the character of women's movements, and especially of feminist movements – the strong emphasis on mobilizing and building the political consciousness of the women most affected, for instance, or the gendered and radical political analysis that informs this consciousness. Other points give us evidence of aspects that we believed to be true – such as the very democratic and accountable decision-making structures our movements attempt to create – but had little systematic data to assert. Finally, they also give us glimpses of things we didn't know – the varied contexts and ways in which women's movements are conceived and born, the complex and sophisticated way in which intersecting issues are integrated into wholly new analyses, and the enormous diversity and innovativeness of the strategies they have used to build their collective power and impact.

Given the number of movements that are repeatedly mentioned in Chapter Three, and for the sake of narrative ease, they are referenced by their initials. The following key will assist the reader to know who is being referred to by given initials:

Fig.1: Case Studies by Region

Initials	Movement	Region / Country	Initials	Movement	Region / Country
CM	Czech Mothers	Czech Republic	IW	Indigenous Women	Mexico
DW	Domestic Workers	USA	P	Piqueteras	Argentina
DMS	Dalit Mahila Samiti	India	OINC	One in Nine Campaign	South Africa
GK	GROOTS Kenya	Kenya	RW	Roma Women	East Europe
PW	Palestinian Women's Movements	Palestine / Middle East	IW	Iranian Women's Movement	Iran / Middle East

We hope this document will become a useful guide to your work, your organization, and the movements in which you are involved. We encourage you to read the full case studies, and to send us your comments, suggestions and feedback, which will help us expand and refine the analysis. We believe that while much remains to be learned, we have made a useful beginning here in unpacking the….

Power of Movements!!

Chapter 1

The Power of Movements
Clarifying our Concepts
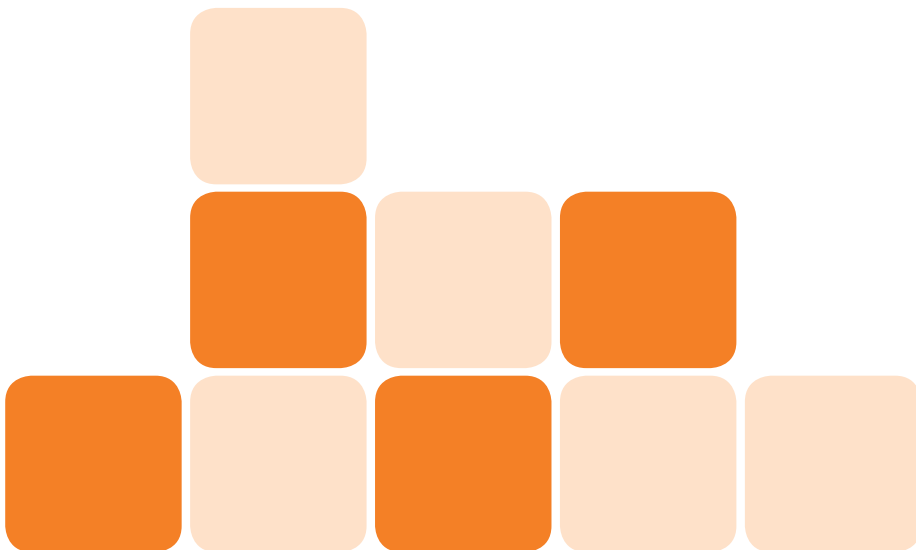
Chapter 1: The Power of Movements: Clarifying our Concepts

By Srilatha Batliwala[1]

"If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading."

Lao-Tzu

This saying of the great Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu seems particularly apt for those of us concerned with the state of feminist movements worldwide at the present time. At some levels, our movements seem to have lost much of the momentum, coherence and impact that they seemed to have had even a decade ago, while in others, women are building their collective power in vibrant ways. Where movement building has weakened, we see a far greater focus on implementing short-term projects and providing services. While these are certainly useful, they are often palliative, without a clear political agenda aimed at transforming gender and other social power relations in the longer term. So although we continue to speak of a "global women's movement" it is unclear whether this exists more in our nostalgic memory than in reality. There are many factors that have contributed to this loss of focus on movement building.

Externally, donors have moved away from support for movement-building strategies, towards "gender mainstreaming" and "gender components" in larger development projects. Governments have co-opted and de-politicized strategies developed by feminist-thinking groups to transform gender power – take for example, the case of micro-credit or political participation. Finally, social movements that were once quite gender-sensitive, or at least felt pressured to focus on women's concerns and leadership within their movements (e.g. the environment, human rights, or economic justice movements) are now far less so or tend to instrumentalize women's concerns without genuinely gendering their perspective, agenda, or strategies.

Internally, feminist activism at some levels has lost a portion of its earlier movement-building focus and momentum. The struggle for organizational or personal survival, for retaining autonomy while also having to compromise with changing funding policies, and the backlash, in many locations, against feminist agendas, have all taken a toll. Conflicts and schisms within and between groups has led to fragmentation and increasing competition for limited resources, without necessarily widening the impact of feminist organizing.

But perhaps most critically, there has been growing confusion, internally, about what constitutes a movement. At a number of international women's meetings, it has been striking to witness the word movement used quite sweepingly, without much clarity. All kinds of aggregations of women's organizations, all varieties of campaigns and activities related to women's issues are now described as movements: e.g., groups of organizations working in a particular region (the "African Women's Movement") or country (the Indian women's movement), or sector / issue (the women's health movement, the reproductive rights movement, the gay/lesbian movement), are described as "movements" whether or not they bear the characteristics of a movement.

Today, there is a vast body of literature on social movements, organizational development, and related subjects. But most of this material has not been developed within a feminist perspective, and so does not really illuminate the concept and practice of building feminist movements. Even today, some

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of the 80s writing on engendering the analysis of development and social change processes[2], and 80s and 90s writing on women's empowerment processes[3], are still the closest approximations or guides to a movement building praxis for feminists.

At AWID, we believe that these conditions make the time ripe for re-examining and clarifying our understanding of movements, movement-building, and most important of all, feminist movements. AWID's strategic initiative "Building Feminist Movements and Organizations" was launched to help contribute to this clarity. But this is not intended as an academic exercise; its purpose is to help ourselves and other groups to re-cast our strategies and catalyze a new wave of movement building that can bring feminist agendas back to global and local politics with renewed clarity, energy and impact.

The Basic Questions

It seems obvious that we cannot locate new strategies to strengthen our movement-building work until we find answers to some basic questions:

- **What is a movement?**
- **What is a feminist movement?**
- **Why do movements matter?**
- **What are the challenges of women's/feminist movements?**
- **What is the relationship of organizations and individuals to movements?**
- **What are the elements of a movement-building approach?**

We know that there cannot be a single, final, authoritative answer to any of these questions. This paper is an attempt to lay out some tentative concepts, definitions, and characteristics of movements, and an initial analysis of some of the current challenges that must be confronted and overcome in order to move forward. We hope this will help us achieve greater clarity about building movements, and particularly feminist movements and the relationship between organizations, individuals, and movements. AWID would like to see the paper stimulate debate and discussion, contextualization of the concepts and analysis, and thus, both refinement and greater precision in our collective understanding and strategies. Finally, we try to provide some basic tools to help us examine our own work – no matter where we are located geographically, thematically, or strategically – so that together, we can begin a new journey of reclaiming feminism, revisiting our current strategies, and revitalizing our movements. To make the paper more accessible, we have avoided footnotes and references in the text, but provide a list of readings and source materials at the end for those who would like to probe these issues in greater depth.

What is a Movement?

While there are many scholarly definitions of social movements, sifting through these shows that movements can be simply defined as *an organized set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change through collective action.* Thus, movements are distinguished by these characteristics:

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2. Such as Maxine Molyneux's and Kate Young's work on women's practical needs and strategic interests and on women's condition and position in societies.
3. Such as DAWN's, Naila Kabeer's, Srilatha Batliwala's and Diane Elson's conceptualizations.

1. *A visible constituency base or membership*;
2. *Members collectivized in either formal or informal organizations*;
3. Some *continuity over time* (i.e., a spontaneous uprising or campaign may not be a movement in itself, though it may lead to one);
4. *Engage in collective actions and activities* in pursuit of the movement's political goals;
5. *Use a variety of actions and strategies* – from confrontational, militant actions (including violent protests), or peaceful protest / non-cooperation (a la Gandhi), public opinion building or advocacy strategies; and
6. Engage clear *internal or external targets* in the change process, such as:

- Their own membership or communities (such as in movements against discriminatory customs and social practices like FGM, violence against women, machismo, etc.);
- Society at large (to change negative attitudes, biases or perceptions of themselves – e.g. racial, gender-based, caste-based, ethnic or religious discrimination);
- Other social groups (such as in claiming land rights or fair wages from landowners or employers);
- The state or regimes in power (in demanding, for instance, democracy, legal reform, or policy change);
- Private sector actors (challenging employment practices, environmental damage caused by or natural resources appropriated by corporations, etc.);
- International institutions (such as the World Bank, UN, IMF, or WTO); and
- A combination of some or all of the above.

To answer the second question – what is a feminist movement? - We may first have to re-formulate what feminism itself means in the world today, in the light of recent history and present reality.

What is Feminism Today?

- Today, feminism would appear to be **both an *ideology* and an *analytical framework*** that is both broader and sharper than it was in the 60s and 70s. The past three decades of activism, advocacy and research, and changing global geo-political context, have generated powerful insights and experience about our gains, setbacks, and the challenges of the future. These have also enabled us to re-frame our philosophy and approach, and generate a broader vision for ourselves and the world we want to create.

- We now stand not only **for gender equality**, but **for the transformation of all social relations of power that oppress, exploit, or marginalize any set of people, women and men, on the basis of their gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, race, religion, nationality, location, class, caste, or ethnicity.** We do not seek simplistic parity with men that would give us the damaging privileges and power that men have enjoyed, and end in losing many of the so-called "feminine" strengths and capacities that women have been socialized to embody. But we seek a transformation that would create gender equality within an entirely new social order – one in which both men and women can individually and collectively live as human beings in societies built on social and economic equality, enjoy the full range of rights, live in harmony with the natural world, and are liberated from violence, conflict and militarization.

- In the current global crisis of rising food prices, exorbitant energy costs, and the nightmare of climate change, feminism **stands for economic policies based upon food security, clean renewable energy, and ecological soundness, in order to ensure a sustainable future for the planet, all its species and its natural resources**.

■ Given the experience of the gendered and inequitable impacts of neo-liberalism and globalization, we also stand **for economic transformation that creates greater social equity and human development**, rather than mere economic growth.

■ We stand **for political transformation that guarantees full citizenship rights, the full body of human rights, and for secular, plural, democratic regimes that are transparent, accountable and responsive to all their citizens, women and men**.

■ Escalating levels of war and civil conflict, the conflict-related displacement and subjugation of both women and men, and increasing use of sexual violence against women as a political tool, have led feminists to **oppose violence** of any kind and to **stand against wars and conflicts that displace, violate, subjugate, and impoverish both women and men**. Conversely, **we stand for peace and non-violence** – and for peaceful resolution of disputes achieved through inclusive and participatory processes.

■ We stand for **responsible co-dependence rather than individualism**, but believe in the **right to freedom of choice of individuals** with respect to their private lives. We oppose the rampant promotion of consumerism that continues to objectify both men and women, and which promotes the wasteful use of the planet's natural resources and devastates the environment.

■ **Feminism stands for the power to, not power over** – we struggle to **change the practice of power** both within our own structures and movements as well as in the social, economic and political institutions we engage. This has created a set of "feminist ethics" which, although they vary in different parts of the world, contain some common principles at the core: creating less vertical and more horizontal, participatory and democratic power and decision-making structures, greater transparency and openness about internal and external processes and finances, ensuring a voice and role for all key stakeholders, internal and external, and building a sense of solidarity / sorority / inclusion, a strong sense of accountability to our constituents and to the larger movements we are linked to, creating flexible, gender-sensitive internal policies and practices based on respect for different capacities, and generally, pursuing non-violent strategies of action. These ethics underlie the struggle, in most feminist movements and organizations, to create feminist ways of working.

■ Consequently, we support the **renewal of our own organizations and movements** through empowering new generations of actors and leaders, and **creating respectful spaces and roles** for the beginners, the experienced, and the wise.

■ Finally, **we stand against all ideologies and all forms of fundamentalisms – that advocate against women's equal rights, or against the human rights of any people,** be it on the basis of economic, social, racial, ethnic, religious, political or sexual identity.

What is a Feminist Movement?

Given our definition of movements, and of feminism in the present global context, feminist movements would have all the features of movements mentioned earlier, but in addition, they would have certain particularly *feminist* characteristics:

■ Their agenda is built from *a gendered analysis* of the problem or situation they are confronting or seeking to change;

■ *Women form a critical mass* of the movement's membership or constituency – women are the subjects, not objects, of the movement;

■ Open espousal of *feminist values and ideology* (gender equality, social and economic equality, the full body of human rights, tolerance, inclusion, peace, non-violence, respectful spaces and roles for all, etc.), even if they don't call themselves "feminist" or articulate these in more culturally specific ways;

- They have systematically centred **women's leadership** in the movement, at all levels – i.e., they do not treat women instrumentally (as good for numbers and resistance, but without real decision-making or strategic power in the movement);

- The movement's **political goals are gendered** (they seek not only a change in the problem, but a change that privileges women's interests and seeks to transform both gender and social power relations);

- They use **gendered strategies and methods** – strategies that build on women's own mobilizing / negotiating capacities, and involve women at every stage of the process; and

- They create more **gendered organizations** – e.g., flatter hierarchies, or more collective leadership systems – and actively experiment with change within their own structures and movements.

This is not to claim that all existing feminist movements – or ones that would claim to be feminist – necessarily manifest all these qualities. Rather, it is an attempt to frame an ideal prototype – or as ideal as we can presently conceive – that feminist movements should aspire to emulate. This is a critical point since many mainstream movements, with very radical agendas, often reproduce the very politics and power hierarchies that they seek to challenge and change elsewhere – the structures of privilege, agenda-setting and decision-making power and exclusion. Unfortunately, many feminist organizations and movements are guilty of the same – so it is all the more important for us to create a framework that enables us to consciously tackle these negative dynamics within our own processes and structures.

Why do Movements Matter?

It is possible to argue that women can be empowered without necessarily building movements, through grassroots work and policy advocacy. Some would assert that macro changes – such as the CEDAW convention or the reproductive and sexual rights guaranteed in the Cairo Plan of Action - were achieved through the research, documentation, activism and advocacy efforts of individuals and organizations, without the sort of movement characteristics that were detailed earlier. While this is true, if we consider the major changes in favour of women and gender equality that have occurred over the past several decades, it becomes evident that none of these could have been achieved without building some kind of **collective power** – whether of individuals, organizations, or a combination of both. Thus, various UN policies and norm structures – such as CEDAW, the Beijing Platform of Action, the recognition of women's rights as human rights, or policy changes at the national level recognizing women's equal right to education, health care, employment, access to credit, etc. - were all the result of organized lobbying by women's organizations / feminist activists and advocates, through their collective action, without the affected constituencies necessarily being directly mobilized or involved in acting for these changes.

However, **the reason movements matter is their capacity to create sustained change at levels that policy change alone cannot reach**. The AWID Forum 2005 in Bangkok was focused on "How Does Change Happen?" Based on extensive empirical and theoretical work over the past two decades, there are several ways of understanding what kinds of changes are needed to make gender equality a lasting reality. One approach[4] states that social transformation that creates both gender and social equality and equity involves challenging and changing at least three core elements of existing power structures:

1. The ideologies that justify and sustain inequality (i.e., the beliefs, attitudes, and practices that are designed to uphold social hierarchies),

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4. Srilatha Batliwala, "Women's Empowerment in South Asia – Concepts and Practices", FAO/ASPBAE, 1992

2. The way resources – material, financial, human, and intellectual – are distributed and controlled, and

3. The institutions and systems that reproduce unequal power relations – the family, community, state, market, education, health, law, etc.

Another approach[5] is to shift power by challenging and changing:

1. Who gets what – the distribution and control of resources;

2. Who does what – the division of labor;

3. Who decides what - decision-making power; and

4. Who sets the agenda – the power to determine whose issues / priorities come to the table for discussion.

Evidence from around the world suggests that movements can build lasting change in some of these dimensions far more effectively, deeply, and lastingly than other interventions. Figure 1, below, places the different dimensions of change needed for a sustained, lasting change in women's *position and condition*, in *their practical needs and strategic interests*, in a diagrammatic form[6]:

Fig. 1: The Dynamic of Change
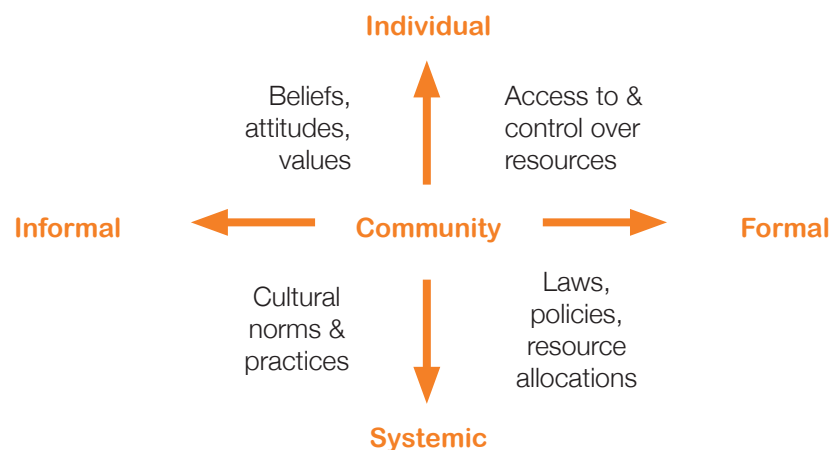
In this illustration, the various domains of change emerge through two intersecting continuums or axes. The "y" axis runs from the individual to community level, and further down to the level of larger systems, and the "x" axis cuts across, representing a continuum from the informal to formal social, cultural, economic and political arrangements. These two axes thus create four quadrants or domains of change that must be tackled for sustainable transformations in gender and social power.

5. Aruna Rao & David Kelleher, "Unravelling Institutionalized Gender Inequality", Gender at Work, 2002, available at www.genderatwork.org/resources.php

6. Adapted from Aruna Rao & David Kelleher, "Is there life after gender mainstreaming?", Gender and Development, Vol.13, No.2, July 2005, pp.57 – 69, P.60, available at www.genderatwork.org/resources.php

On the right, we see the *formal* mechanisms that influence individual and collective status: individual resource ownership (land, house, a job, educational level, access to health care, etc.) and the laws, policies, and resource allocations at the systemic level that determine the affluence, poverty, or status of different groups (equality guarantees in law and constitutions, affirmative action policies, or special budgets for women's social or economic development programs; or laws criminalizing same-sex relationships or sex work). These are the domains that can be challenged and transformed through research, advocacy, campaigns, and other interventions, without necessarily building movements of marginalized or discriminated groups. The campaigns for inclusion of women's unpaid subsistence work in national accounting systems, advocacy for gender budgeting or quotas for women in education, employment, training, and political bodies, and advocacy for changing discriminatory laws, are all examples of interventions that have brought about changes in the *formal* individual, community, or systemic domains.

On the left of the diagram are the *informal* cultural and social systems that are internalized by individuals and operate within communities, and which usually determine women's access to the opportunities, rights, and entitlements provided through changes in the *formal* domains. These informal dimensions include the traditions, beliefs, values, attitudes, norms and practices that are deeply embedded in culture, and which operate at systemic, community, and individua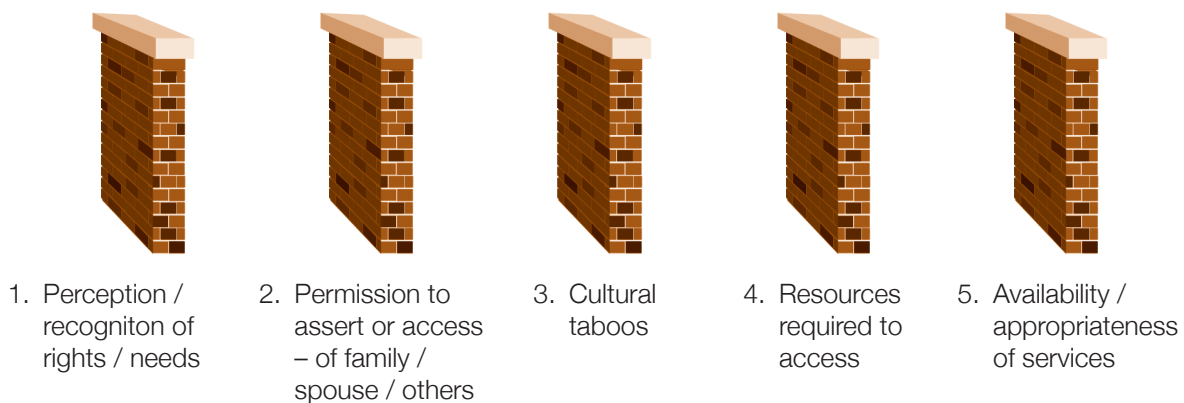l levels. Culture is far slower to change than formal policy or law, and law and policy do not automatically create changes in culture. Thus, the culture of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion is the most challenging domain, where formal changes often do not penetrate.

Fig.2 – Barriers to Women's Access to their Rights / Entitlements

1. Perception / recogniton of rights / needs
2. Permission to assert or access – of family / spouse / others
3. Cultural taboos
4. Resources required to access
5. Availability / appropriateness of services

The diagram above illustrates the many hurdles women must cross in order to access their rights, most of which lie in the informal domain of cultural norms and socialization. Let us take the example of rape – while the laws of the land may have been reformed to give women access to justice, there are many cultural barriers she must cross to reach it. Firstly, the victim's own belief systems must be transformed to recognize that this is a crime of violence, and not something to be hidden for fear of being shamed or shunned by her family or community. Then, her family must support, rather than hinder her, in filing a complaint with the police and making the matter more public. The attitudes of the police must be changed to avoid further harassment or shaming of the victim, or to prevent their aligning themselves with the rapist, if he is from a more powerful group, and refusing to take up the case. She and her family need the support of the larger community, whose traditional taboos against making such matters public need to be altered. Then, she must have the resources – in terms of time, money, etc. – to seek legal assistance. And finally, legal services or courts must not only be available, but provide appropriate services

to the victim – such as closed hearings and sensitive judges. This clearly shows that the existence of formal laws and rights is no guarantee that women can actually reach them to obtain justice. We can cite similar examples from many other areas – lesbian women seeking partnership rights, sex workers fighting for health care, married women seeking contraception, or girl children wanting the same educational opportunities as their brothers.

And this is where the special power of movements, and especially grassroots movements, comes in. While individual feminists and women's organizations have successfully campaigned for equality under law, for millions of women, especially in the South, formal law is often too remote, expensive and difficult to access. In many contexts, rights are determined not by formal courts but by customary laws and practices, administered by traditional clan, caste, or community mechanisms, where gender equality is considered contrary to custom and culture, and where patriarchal and other hierarchical belief systems are deeply embedded. So while feminist advocacy may have resulted in pro-women policies, laws, and resource allocations, unless women themselves, and their families and communities, are able to break the hold of tradition and taboo, these positive gains have little meaning. Constituency-based movements, using consciousness-raising, political awareness and other strategies that challenge the power and practice of patriarchy, are far better able to tackle and bring down the barriers to women's equality in the sites where they are most deeply embedded.

The other reason why movements matter is that they can usually impact on a scale that single organizations, no matter how radical, effective, and successful, are able to do. We have all seen evidence of how dedicated organizations working with a feminist agenda, have tackled forms of oppression and exploitation and created significant shifts in cultural attitudes and practices at the local level. But for these transformations to occur on a larger scale, building feminist movements becomes critical.

Building Feminist Movements and Feminist Movement Building

Movement building is a process of mobilizing the constituency that implicitly benefits from a particular social, economic or political change, organizing the constituency in some way, and building a clear political agenda (or change agenda), and preparing the constituency to choose its targets, strategies, and actions to bring about the change they seek. In this context, it is important to distinguish between the ideas of **building feminist movements** and **feminist movement building**.

Building feminist movements is a process that mobilizes women (and their allies or supporters) for struggles whose goals are specific to gender equality outcomes – for instance, for eradicating practices like female genital mutilation, bride-burning and female foeticide, or violence against women, or for expanding equality of access to citizenship (e.g. franchise), land or inheritance rights, education, employment, health, or reproductive and sexual rights. In this sense, the struggles to change customary inheritance rights in Kenya and Tanzania, the anti-FGM movements in several countries of Africa, movements against the repeal of gender-equal legal rights in several parts of the Middle East, the sex workers movements in several parts of Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Americas, the Afro-Brazilian women's movement in Brazil, the reproductive rights movements across Latin America, the anti-dowry and anti-sex determination movements of India, the struggles against honor-killings in Pakistan, against the trafficking of women in the Philippines and Indonesia, or for the rights of migrant women in China – all these are examples of the *building of feminist movements*.

Feminist movement building, on the other hand, could be defined as the attempt to bring feminist analysis and gender-equality perspectives into other movements – classic examples are the efforts of many feminists to engender the analyses, goals and strategies of the environment, peace, human rights, and peasant and labour movements around the world. Code Pink, created to engender the peace movement that arose in the US against the invasion of Iraq and the war in Afghanistan is a good

example of feminist movement building. Greenbelt Kenya – led by Nobel laureate Wanghari Mathai, is an environmental movement with a strongly gendered analysis that mobilizes poor women and men in a larger struggle for protecting and preserving the natural resource base of their homelands. Shack Dwellers International and its national chapters struggle for the rights of tenure and safe habitat of slum dwellers, but with a strong feminist analysis and women's leadership. Feminist Sandinistas played a strong role in attempting to bring gender equality issues to the centre of that political struggle in Nicaragua. Indigenous women across Central and South America work for recognition of their rights and concerns as part of broader Indigenous people's struggles. South African feminists have played a similar role in the anti-apartheid movement and now in the movements around HIV-AIDS. These are all examples of how feminists change and influence the building of movements with other agendas, to ensure that gender-equality outcomes are not marginalized or forgotten.

Where are Feminist Movements Today?

Several factors have weakened and fragmented feminist movements, particularly over the past ten or fifteen years, and they act in complex and inter-linked ways. Some of the most damaging are:

- The **co-option and or distortion of feminist ideology, discourse and agendas** by mainstream institutions and social forces – such as governments and multilateral institutions, fundamentalist projects, donors, business interests, and the media. The term "empowerment", for instance, which was claimed by feminists to signify the challenging task of shifting gender and social power relations in favour of women, and especially poor women, has been taken over and virtually divested of meaning and political content. Not only is empowerment now conflated with uni-dimensional interventions like micro-credit, but has been claimed by management gurus in the human resources field as an individualized motivational tool. At another level, the media has played a mainly negative role, simultaneously demonizing feminists and appropriating their language to appear progressive and "modern". Private interests have also co-opted and distorted feminist ideas of equality for questionable commercial ends: promoting images of "empowered" and "liberated" women to sell products or lifestyles that have nothing to do with feminism.

- **The resurgence of fundamentalisms of various kinds** – economic, religious, ethnic, and other – have posed possibly the greatest threat and setback to feminist agendas and activism. Economic fundamentalism has imposed an economic order on the world which has resulted in decreased sovereignty of nation states, intensified the tyranny of structural adjustment programs and market dominance that we have been ill prepared to confront. The resulting impacts on women and gender relations have been complex – the burgeoning demand for women's labour in some sectors ("feminizing" of the labour force), and pockets of acute and escalating poverty where poor women bear the burden of household survival with the least support or resources to do so. Religious and ethnic fundamentalisms worldwide have created similarly complex challenges. On the one hand, there is the rabid and overt attack on feminist agendas in all regions where they have had a visible impact on policies, laws and social norms – ensuring inheritance, equal pay, labour protection, reproductive, and sexual rights for women, or raising public awareness of gendered violence and discrimination. Here, the fundamentalist project has been to discredit feminists as man-haters, baby-killers, family-breakers and sexual deviants. On the other, there has been a cunning cooption and distortion of feminist projects – such as the demand for equality under law or a greater role in civil and political life - to spread fear and hatred, vilify and demonize other communities or instrumentalize women into becoming armed militants in ethnic conflicts. In other groups, there is a straightforward attack on and attempts to rescind women's social and political gains of the past decades and the re-assertion of medieval forms of patriarchal gender relations. In most cases, feminists and women's groups have been ill equipped to face these serious, complex and multiple

challenges. This has led to retreat, or piecemeal responses, or a kind of underground activism that has further weakened and fragmented our movements.

■ There has been a gradual but accelerating **flow of major donor resources *away* from movement-building approaches** and *towards* projects and interventions that supposedly show more "visible" and "measurable" returns. While this has been a long-standing perception amongst many of us, AWID's Where is the Money for Women's Rights research (2006 and 2007) has now established this fact with rigorous data. This de-funding is in turn a product of more serious and subterranean political trends in many developed countries: a backlash against feminist ideology, politics and power; a growing tide of political and social conservatism; pandering to the sexist and conservative elites in developing countries; and above all, a growing suspicion of approaches that do not somehow return benefit to the investing countries – e.g., opening up of markets for their exports, increasing purchasing power, creating better trained but low-cost labour for overseas production, lowering trade barriers and investment controls, and so forth. And of course, movement-building approaches are above all suspect because they are considered too political – and therefore threatening to the interests of the developed countries or their elite allies in the South.

■ **The magic bullet syndrome** is a result of this larger political trend, but is another factor that has had a very negative impact on building feminist movements. This has produced one of the great ironies of our times: even as there is an apparent increase in global commitment to poverty eradication and social justice – as witnessed by the great fanfare surrounding the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and their centrality to the new aid architecture – there is a growing delusion that there are magic bullets and quick fixes which can override the need for more fundamental but painful and longer-term transformative processes. Feminist activists have always understood that positive and lasting change in the status of women can only result from processes that tackle the basic structures of power and privilege and truly transform our societies in favour of women and all marginalized and excluded people. But today, our organizations are unlikely to be resourced for such work; but the money will come streaming in if we offer to implement some of the magic bullets that are currently popular shortcuts to women's empowerment and gender equality, viz.: gender mainstreaming, women-focused micro-finance projects and quotas for women in politics. Many of these are rooted in feminist ideas and advocacy, but they have been divested of the complex transformative strategies within which they were originally embedded and reduced to formulas, rituals and mantras.

■ **The "NGOization" of feminist movements** is another critical factor that has weakened our movement building capacity and focus. The search for resources and sustainability led feminist activists and movement-builders to found organizations within the NGO paradigm. National legal and regulatory requirements impose certain kinds of structural norms on these, and donor requirements and priorities impose another set of norms. Such organizations, often born out of movements or to support movement-building work, are gradually pushed into running projects and services, some of which may actually contravene their politics, ideology, or even their own experience of what really works. Many feminist scholars believe that this has also gradually shifted power away from the constituency that movements organized and into the hands of organizations and organizational leadership that is increasingly less connected and accountable to the constituencies they claim to serve.

■ The complexity and breadth of issues that feminists have tackled over the past three decades, the emergence of new issues, voices and interest groups, has also led to a level of **specialization and diversification** that is considered by some to have fragmented and splintered feminist movements. Today we have an overwhelming spectrum of distinct struggles and associations by women: Economic empowerment and labour rights groups, Indigenous women, peasant and landless women's groups, women's health, reproductive and sexual rights movements, land and inheritance rights struggles, housing and slum dwellers movements, lesbian and transsexual

groups, struggles of women displaced by economic development projects or wars and conflicts, sex workers movements, anti-trafficking and violence against women campaigns, women's legal rights campaigns, not to mention struggles against specific forms of discrimination (such as FGM, dowry, caste), struggles of women of particular ethnicities and religious groupings (such as Muslim women, Roma women, Chiapas women) or occupations (fish workers, street vendors, small women farmers, piqueteras), women living with or caring for people affected by AIDs – this list could go on and on. Each of these has their own agendas, goals and strategies, presenting a bewildering array of priorities and movements that testify to the vibrancy, but also the segmentation, of women's movements. While there is nothing inherently problematic about this, it presents some challenges in terms of creating an overarching and shared political agenda to which all these components would subscribe – the problem of speaking on at least some set of issues with a unified voice. This fragmentation, without some mechanism for cohesion, also enables outside forces to "divide and rule" more easily.

- Feminist movements have also lost some of their early clarity in terms of their **theory of change**. In the 70s and 80s, for instance, feminists who were mobilizing around the world to enhance women's role and representation in politics and political structures, were operating with a theory of change that looked something like this:

  - That the transformation of both the position and *condition* of women at the societal or macro level could be lastingly achieved only through political change (enabling policies, legislation, enforcement and protection of rights);

  - That women in politics would advance the cause of gender equality and women's rights;

  - That unless women themselves were represented in local, national and global political bodies, the momentum for such change could not be sustained;

  - That a critical mass of women in political institutions would also initiate change in broader policies of development and international relations - by fostering and promoting policies of peace and non-violent conflict resolution, sustainable and socially just development, access to and protection of the full body of human rights, and placing people above profits; and

  - That a critical mass of women in political institutions would transform the very nature of power and the practice of politics through values of cooperation and collaboration, holding power in trusteeship ("power on behalf of, not over"), greater transparency and public accountability, etc. In other words, that women would *play politics* differently and *practice power* accountably.

Work on women's empowerment in the 80s and 90s was similarly based on a notion that the long-term transformation of gender relations would occur only when feminist movements were able to challenge and transform (a) the ideologies that justified gender discrimination; (b) the access to and distribution of both public and private resources that privileged men in every social strata; and (c) the institutions (family, market, state, community) and structures (economic, political, social, cultural – such as policies, religious practices, political barriers, and other exclusionary structures such as race, class, caste, religion, etc.) through which patriarchal and elitist norms of privilege and power were perpetuated. This analysis provided a kind of clarity – no matter how illusory – that informed and framed strategies of women's empowerment, and helped ensure that they did not focus on only one of these dimensions at the cost of the others.

Today, the tough lessons of experience have humbled us – we know that structures of power are incredibly resilient. We have seen that they find ways of both overtly accommodating us (such as signing the Beijing or Cairo Platforms of Action, creating national women's commissions, or even reforming biased laws), and covertly marginalizing or subverting our agendas in unforeseen ways (through the travesty, for instance, that gender mainstreaming has become, or by making micro-credit programs stand in for women's empowerment). Globalization and its attendant impacts on women and their communities

– social, economic and political – are something we have yet to fully absorb or understand, much less be capable to tackle. We have not yet synthesized or built upon these lessons to create a new theory of change – and indeed, there are precious few spaces to do this important "thought work" given the end of the global conference era and the de-funding of "talk shops".

So it is difficult to find any clear theory or analysis of how to achieve a broader gendered social transformation informing feminist activism. The theory of change underlying many of our actions and strategies is often too narrow or limited, or too short-term and pragmatic, forgetting the longer-term social transformations that would lead to sustainable shifts in gender and social power relations. This is all the more critical since the forces of globalization, fundamentalism, violence and conflict, and intensifying backlashes against feminist agendas mentioned above require responses that arise from a comprehensive, powerful analysis of how these forces are acting on both gender and social power. We need, therefore, to re-articulate a theory of change for our times – this would then become the basis for building the common agenda that is either missing or too weak in our current politics and vision.

Movements and Organizations – A Relational View

The relationship between movements and organizations is a complex and sometimes contradictory one. To begin unravelling this intricate relationship, it is helpful to start by focusing on the central concept within the term "movement" – viz., that movement means something dynamic, something moving towards some goal. It cannot be used to signify something that is either static or in a constant state of reproducing goods, services, or relations. Organizations related to movements must therefore possess the same qualities – they must be in a state of motion, moving towards some particular set of goals or changes that they were set up to promote. We are in search here of a better understanding of what makes for feminist "movement-building" organizations – and hence, organizations that can be said to be part of feminist movements.

To enlighten us, it may be helpful to develop a typology of organizations to clarify how different organizations stand in relation to movements and movement-building work. One distinction made in the literature on non-profit organizations is between "**member-serving**" and **"other-serving"** organizations. Within women's and feminist movements, we have both types.

Member-serving organizations are those set up by movement constituents / members to structure and govern themselves more democratically and effectively, to gain greater visibility and voice, make coherent and strategic decisions, and/or coordinate their collective power and action: unions or workers federations (such as that of self-employed women, home-based workers, street vendors, sex workers, etc.), ascriptive associations or organizations of particular identity groups (Indigenous women, Dalit women, lesbian and transsexual groups, etc.), and associations of women and communities that transcend traditional sociological categories and are based on new identities emerging from their social or political experience, leading to shared agendas (piqueteras, slum and barrio women, migrant, displaced, and conflict-affected women). Such organizations, since they arise from the movement's constituency base, stand at the centre of movements, and have little problems with establishing their credibility or legitimate right to represent the interests of their members to the external world. They can, however – including feminist member-serving organizations – become static, hierarchical, less democratic, or be dominated by authoritarian styles of leadership, and these trends have to be examined and corrected, regardless of the legitimacy they enjoy in the eyes of others.

Other-serving organizations, into which the majority of feminist groups and NGOs fall, stand in a far more complex and contested relationship to movements. Debates have arisen as to whether these organizations are or are not part of particular or generic feminist movements. This is itself the result of the co-option, specialization and hierarchization that we discussed earlier under the challenges facing femin-

ist movements. In many regions of the world, as regimes became friendlier to gender equality goals, both governments and donors played a role in converting groups that were once operating autonomously or even confrontationally to become their technical assistance arms, or in-house "gender experts". Can such groups be considered a part of the feminist movement?

Similarly, many feminist and women's organizations that were formed to support and strengthen movement-building and movements, have diverted their energies to executing donor- or government-driven projects and sub-contracts, simply in order to survive and sustain themselves. Here, some difficult questions must be answered about the rationale that guides these compromises, and whether the altered focus genuinely serves the final social and political purpose for which these organizations were originally established.

There are also many other-serving women's organizations – including some with sound feminist thinking - that exclusively provide some set of services to women: shelters or child care or credit or legal aid. They too are important, and may have a conscious relationship to movements, but this would mean they have to do something more than service-provision to become what we might term "movement organizations". They too must have internal monitoring and accountability mechanisms to check how their services and activities are contributing to a movement or its political agenda. We must acknowledge that sometimes, movements need these services in order to enable their constituents to engage in organizing and action towards their agenda, or to protect their members and leaders from legal or political attacks. We need to put such organizations in a separate and valued category, which we might term **"movement serving"** rather than movement-building.

Fig.3 – Movements & Organizations - A Relational View
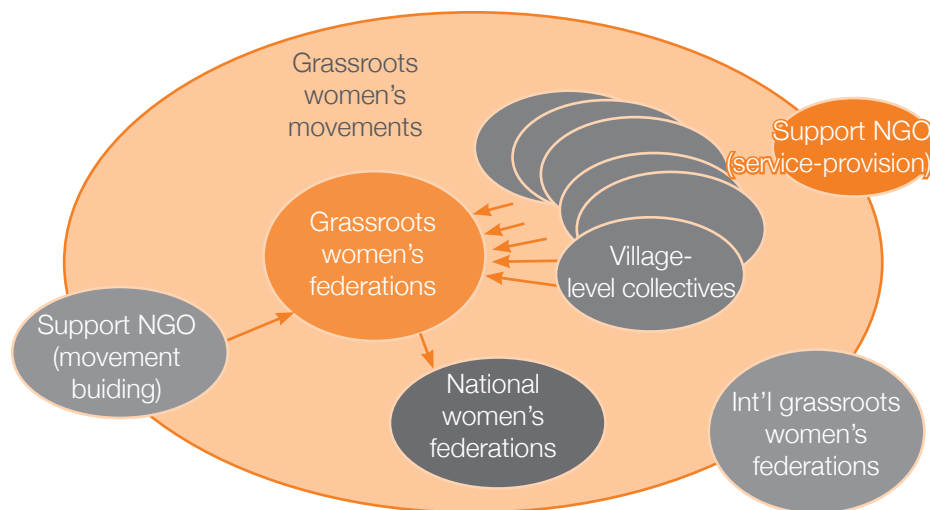
It is important to emphasize that **we should not put our organizations in a hierarchy** where only those claiming to be movement-building organizations are valued, valorized, or glamorized, and those providing critical services – shelters and safe houses, child care, community kitchens, crisis loans, legal assistance - to women or their communities, or those helping women survive in politically or economically hostile environments, are put at the bottom of the pile. Figure 3 illustrates one model of the relationship that can exist between member-serving, other-serving, and service-providing organizations and a hypothetical grassroots women's movement, to help us understand where we can all stand within a movement if we have a shared agenda.

Another divide that has opened up in many regions is that between **autonomous feminist groups and feminist NGOs**. In the 70s and 80s, autonomous groups prided themselves on their independence from government, donors and business interests – particularly from funding from any of these sources – and their voluntarism. Most members of autonomous groups supported themselves through jobs in the academy, the media, or independent consulting, and were thus able to contribute their time to feminist activism without financial survival concerns. However, the changes in political environment and institutionalization that occurred in the 90s, significantly in Latin America and Asia, led many of these groups to mutate into NGOs. Many academic feminists also became "femocrats" in governments or donor agencies, or elected representatives.

Many autonomous feminist groups have been the fiercest critics of the NGO-ization of the women's movement, and challenge the right of the latter to be considered feminist or even within the movement at all. However, these same groups have often become isolated pockets of individuals with a strong sense of ideological superiority, unengaged in any kind of mobilization or larger movement-building work, or unconnected to constituency-based movements in their regions. Other feminist activists are often critical of these groups for these very reasons, and question their right to speak for the movement.

Feminist NGOs, on the other hand, who have become mainly involved in donor-driven project implementation, or sub-contracting to governments and multilateral institutions, are in an equally difficult position to claim movement status – are they still part of the movement, though many would insist they are? In some contexts, it is such organizations that have or are still providing useful resources and some voice or space to women affected by new forms of poverty or violence – women who would otherwise be completely marginalized, isolated, and forgotten. But to claim a relationship with feminist movements, they would have to subject themselves to the same litmus tests we have mentioned earlier – is their work either directly promoting or consciously linked to a constituency base, or mobilizing one, and moving ahead with collective power towards a political agenda created together with that constituency? Do they have *de facto* and visible mechanisms of internal monitoring and accountability to this agenda and constituency, rather than a movement rhetoric that disguises a *de facto* accountability to their funders? This is a difficult tightrope to walk for most.

We must also acknowledge that no matter how strong or vibrant our movements are, there are periods of time when external conditions or internal dynamics propel us into retreat, dormancy, or fragmentation. Regimes may close off democratic space for organizing (as in Zimbabwe, Egypt, or some East European countries), wars and conflicts may derail our organizing efforts (Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka), resources may dry up to a point where leadership is forced to abandon movement-building mode and go into other strategies or locations (India, Bangladesh, the Philippines), or our own institutionalization and internal politics leads to fragmentation, polarization, or loss of direction. But these are the very challenges that we can convert into opportunities to engage in deeper critical reflection and find innovative new directions to re-energize ourselves and our movements.

Our purpose is not to judge, condemn or exclude, but to help us find useful analytical lenses through which to examine the relationship of our own organizational locations and structures to movements, and to create some clarity about how we can align ourselves more strongly towards building and/or strengthening feminist movements, if that is what we wish to do.

Movements and Individuals

Our definition and analysis of movements, and our focus on the relationship between organizations and movements, should not result in diminishing the important and often critical role that individuals play. Feminist movements, in particular, have been strengthened and sometimes even propelled by the role of individual feminists, many of whom did not belong to feminist, women's or progressive organizations

of any kind. In some parts of the world, in fact, individual feminists, working in mainstream professions and institutions, became critical intellectual and strategic leaders of feminist movement building. They were scholars and scientists in the academy, doctors and health care professionals in hospitals, health centres, or government health departments or ministries; they were demographers and population experts, economists, teachers and educators; they were journalists and media professionals, and lawyers and legal scholars; they were feminists in donor agencies, or in multilateral, bilateral, and international financial institutions. These were a multitude of feminist women deeply committed to the feminist agenda and to marginalized and excluded women and men.

This trend continues to be a reality, and these women can legitimately claim membership of movements. These are individuals who are not necessarily part of the affected group or constituency organizing for change – they need not ally themselves with movements, they have professional careers and job security - and yet they choose, for ideological reasons, to commit themselves to advancing women's rights and social transformation both within their own institutional settings as well as by supporting feminist and women's movements on the ground. Throughout the world, these individuals have played critical roles at some historic moments, in even the survival of feminist movements and activists.

In Latin America, for instance, during the era of authoritarian regimes that clamped down on social movements and arrested their key leaders and activists, feminist women in the academy provided spaces to convene and sustain each other until better times; some even provided financial support and legal aid to activists under threat. In South Asia, individual feminists in various professional locations have provided vital support to grassroots struggles and movements of marginalized people (such as LGBT groups or sex workers unions) in the form of legal aid, convening spaces, policy analysis, research for advocacy, etc. In many parts of the world, individuals have acted as whistle-blowers when movements and/or their leaders have been attacked or suppressed, providing critical exposure in the media, with international or national human rights commissions, and creating vital public awareness and debate locally and even internationally.

Individuals stand in a range of relationships to movements – some enter and exit on an *ad hoc* or need basis, some associate themselves with specific time-bound projects, programs, or research studies, and others form long-term relationships of solidarity and accompaniment. All these roles are important to strengthening movements, and greatly expand the intellectual resources and expertise they can access in their struggles. They also provide a set of alliances that, in certain circumstances, lend movements greater credibility, legitimacy and power.

Movement Building – Some Key Elements of a Feminist Process

Strong and sustainable feminist movements will arise from processes that contain most of these elements – one can argue that it is these elements that make a process both feminist and a movement:

- **Consciousness raising / awareness-building** – feminists more or less invented consciousness-raising, since early feminist analysis understood that women's participation in, co-option by, or reproduction of their own oppression, exclusion, and subordination was a result of the false consciousness in which they existed. This false consciousness is created through the processes of both socialization (conditioning into particular values, beliefs, world-views and roles), as well as structural barriers and threats (intimidation or violence against women who strayed from their allotted position). Raising their consciousness of their oppression and exploitation thus became a critical first step in building feminist movements. A plethora of innovative and powerful consciousness-raising tools were created by feminist popular educators around the world – tools and methods that have sadly fallen into disuse in the current times, as the consciousness-raising process itself has often been abandoned in favour of other first steps such as forming savings and credit

groups. Latin American feminist popular educators also gave their sisters the powerful idea of putting Freirian liberation pedagogy to feminist use, and thus enabling women's consciousness raising processes to lead to a gendered analysis of the larger social, economic and political structures of oppression in which women lived.

■ **Building a mass base** – The mobilization of aware, conscious women into varied forms of collectives or groups, named and framed using culturally and locally appropriate and familiar forms –the "sanghas" and "samoohs" of Indian women's empowerment programs, for instance, or the "marais" of New Zealand, or the "mothers centres" of Germany and the Netherlands, or the market women's groups of East and West Africa, the "mehfils" of the Magreb, etc. These collectives formed the foundation of early feminist organizing and movement building, since it helped organize the movement's constituency or mass base into visible and accessible units that could then link up and amplify their voice, vision, and struggle. This constituency base and its organizational and leadership structures were distinct and autonomous from the NGOs that might have mobilized them. In other words, it was they who were at the vanguard of the movement, not the NGO, although the NGO continued to provide strategic analysis and support, new ideas, and occasionally, protection from backlash. Building this foundation was painstaking business, but irreplaceable – it gave feminist movements their teeth, their legitimacy, and their power. The diversion of energy into other activities has cost us a great deal, including our political power.

■ The question, though, is **do numbers really count**? Lesbian or transsexual movements, or feminist disability groups, might argue that it's not numbers but tactics, and that their smaller numbers do not make them less of a movement. The answer probably lies somewhere between these poles: numbers do count, but not in some absolute quantitative sense. They matter because to qualify as a movement, we have to demonstrate an organized constituency base that has engaged in some collective action – so whether it's a hundred or a hundred thousand, it's the level of organization, cohesion, a shared political agenda, and the exercise of collective power and action in pursuit of that agenda that matters. Fifty people or organizations, meeting at a conference or workshop on some issue of shared concern, do not constitute a movement, though a movement could easily be born in such a space.

■ Feminist movements will have **clearly crafted political agendas** that are informed and framed by a theory of change that incorporates both gender and social transformation. These agendas will be generated through bottom-up processes that use the process of agenda-building itself as a consciousness raising tool. In other words, they would not have "ideologues" who create the agenda and vision, and "followers" who are converted to and mobilized around this. Feminist agendas will arise through debate and democratic discussion in which constituents have a large and even defining role.

■ A **spiral** of mobilization, organization, building a theory of change, common political agenda, action strategies, and critical reflection and re-grouping should characterize feminist movements. That is, they should be **dynamic, learning movements**, not static ones reproducing the same analysis and strategies without spaces for critical reflection and re-grouping for greater impact. They will also attempt to expand their constituency base with each round of the spiral, in order to increase their collective power and political clout.

■ Given the importance of learning and change, **building a new kind of knowledge, and a new politics of knowledge building**, would be a key feature of feminist movements. Feminist movements would challenge the monopoly of knowledge professionals (academics, researchers, development and gender "experts"), by democratizing the processes of learning and knowledge generation within and by their movements. They should create space, respect, and concrete mechanisms for their members to participate in theorizing, analyzing, monitoring and evaluating their experiences. They make it possible for knowledge to be created in multiple forms that do not privilege the written word and patronize others forms of expression – oral traditions, street plays, art, or music. They may use the most modern technologies of documentation and communication,

but will make these a part of the knowledge "democracy" rather than the "Knowledge economy" by challenging concepts like patents and copyrights. They would also resist the exploitation and expropriation of their knowledge (of plants and seeds, or organic farming methods, for instance) by external forces such as multinational corporations.

- Most importantly, feminist movements would be concerned **not just with changes at the formal institutional level but at the informal level** or within the actual contexts and communities in which their constituents transact their lives and live their realities (i.e., not just changes in legislation or policy but in the attitudes and practices of families and communities). There will be a strong emphasis, therefore, on substantive rights and not just on formal structures that often do not reach women in their life contexts (a legal reform, for instance, without the organizing and consciousness raising at the community level that enables women to access and assert these rights).

- Finally, feminist movements should **focus on transforming their own practice of power,** and build new models of power and leadership within their own structures and processes. This has been a distinct feature of many feminist movements worldwide – the attempts to break away from patriarchal models of power and create more shared models of leadership, authority and decision-making. While these have not always been successful – the insidious and hidden power structures that have emerged, for instance, in overtly "flat" feminist organizations like autonomous women's groups – are worthy examples of the search for new ways of governing ourselves, making decisions, and sharing both power and responsibility.

The Life Cycle of Movements

Movements, like people and organizations, also have life cycles. They arise, grow, thrive, achieve impact and even fame, and then, sometimes, go into phases of dormancy, retreat, or decline. Chronologically "old" movements are not necessarily the most vibrant or successful ones. Movements don't have to live forever – indeed, if they are successful, they probably should fade away as their political agendas are achieved and their constituents reap the fruits of change. Some movements give birth to others – witness the number of other movements that early feminist movements have themselves mothered. But if their agenda has not been achieved, or their collective power has become diminished, it is vital for movements to renew and re-build themselves.

Interesting work on the life cycle of non-profit organizations has highlighted five stages in their life cycle, and we have adapted these to approximate the life cycle of movements as well:

Stage One: **Imagine and Inspire:**
We know what we want to change, and who needs to be involved in the change

Stage Two: **Found and Frame**
Building our theory of change and deciding how we will begin the process of change

Stage Three: **Ground and Grow**
Mobilizing and building the organizations of our constituents

Stage Four: **Struggle and Learn**
Engage the targets of change and experiment with different strategies to see what works

Stage Five: **Review and Renew**
What have we learnt so far and how do we re-configure our structure, agenda, strategies, and tactics for the next stage of action?

We are clearly in a historic moment when feminists must review and renew their movements, and locate the strategies that can best achieve this in the current global and local political and economic context. In the essay "Great Transitions: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead", Raskin *et al* say:

> *"In the past, new historical eras emerged organically and gradually out of the crises and opportunities presented by the dying epoch. In the [current] planetary transition, reacting to historical circumstance is insufficient. With the knowledge that our actions can endanger the wellbeing of future generations, humanity faces an unprecedented challenge – to anticipate the unfolding crises, envision alternative futures and make appropriate choices. The question of the future, once a matter for dreamers and philosophers, has moved to the centre of the development… agendas."*

We hope this kind of reflection paper is a useful input into our great transition, into the processes of renewing and rebuilding feminist movements.

* * * *

Suggested Readings on Movements and Movement-building

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Chapter 2

BFEMO Case Study Summaries
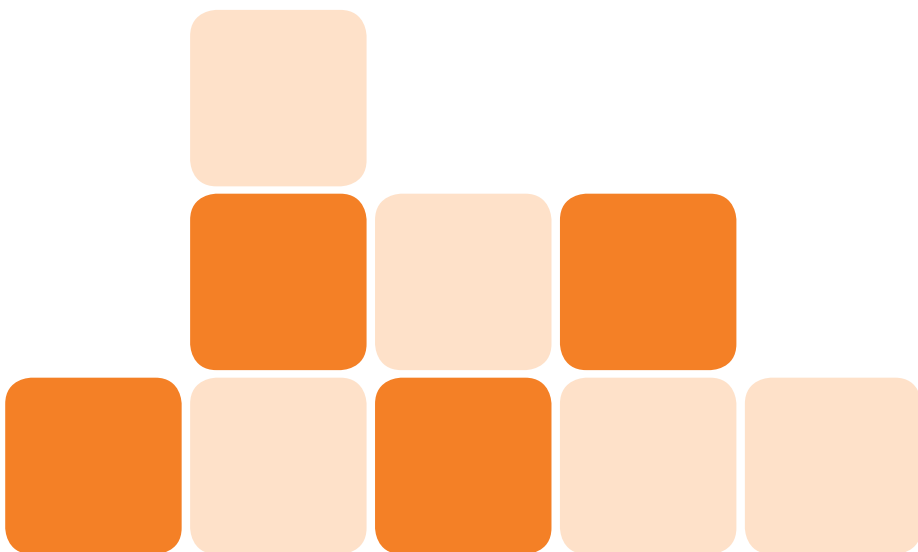
Women in the Indigenous Peoples' Movements of Mexico: New Paths for Transforming Power

A summary of the Case Study by Marusia López Cruz[1]

Mexico is a pluriethnic, pluricultural country - the indigenous population numbers 12.7 million people, representing 13% of the national population. However, the Mexican state, far from recognizing and protecting the rights of its indigenous people, has always maintained, tolerated, and even promoted xenophobia and the excessive exploitation of this population's resources and labour, which not only undermines existing cultural diversity, but also puts the identity, sovereignty, and governability of the nation at risk. This historic marginalization and discrimination against all indigenous people particularly affects women in all spheres of life whether social, economical or political.

In the 1970s an indigenous movement (lead by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation - EZLN) emerged that began to question the official line regarding a homogenous, racially and culturally integrated nation. Against this backdrop, indigenous women began to seek out spaces for coming together and expressing their own demands which allowed for more active participation in their own communities and in the national indigenous movement. The participation and leadership achieved by the Zapatista women (the existence of women commanders and spokespeople in the ranks of the EZLN, the role they played in the process of negotiating with the government, among other things), represented the symbolic arrival of women into leadership spaces and to the recognition of an agenda of their own within the indigenous people's movement.

The momentum generated by this initiative resulted in an assembly constituting the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) in 1996, when indigenous women participants took on the task of forming a special women's commission, through which they could participate with a voice of their own in all the spaces of indigenous organization. One year after the CNI was formed, the women pushing for this commission coincided on the need to count on a space of their own that would be national in scope and serve for analysis and reflection. In order to achieve this, an alliance was necessary between different women who already had exerted strong leadership within their organizations or communities, as well as feminist organizations close to them. The main result of this alliance was the formation of the National Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Women (Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas - CNMI)which brought together more than 700 women from the country's different indigenous peoples.

The National Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Women

Organisational Structure and Goals

The National Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Women is a network with a presence in 14 states of Mexico that consists of indigenous women's groups and state wide women's networks. The National Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Women is led by a Coordinator elected every two years who is charged with representing the organization, facilitating the participation of its members in different events to which they are invited, and implementing the decisions made in the annual assembly, which is made up of representatives from all the states that have a presence in the organization. In the assemblies, formative issues are defined, participants are informed about the advances and limitations of each group; and the Coordinator is elected on a rotating basis. Most of the assemblies are held in Mexico City, the site of the Coordinating Committee offices.

The initial goal of the CNMI was to provide a broad, inclusive space in which the voices of indigenous women could be heard. Even though the Coordinating Committee's initial goal is still in effect, the agenda has gradually been transformed since the group was founded.

The current agenda can best be described by dividing it into four major issues:

- Defence of the fundamental demands of the national indigenous movement
- The need for State policies that respond to its demands
- Political participation
- The transformation of the traditional practices and customs that limit its development and place its integrity at risk

In essence, the agenda of the Coordinating Committee is characterized by its denunciation of the economic oppression and racism that marks the insertion of indigenous peoples into the national project, at the same time that it struggles within its organizations and communities to change those elements that exclude and oppress women.

Strategies and Achievements

The main strategies adopted by the Coordinating Committee are strengthening indigenous women's organizations and the inclusion of their demands in public policy priorities and the agendas of social movements. Members of the Coordinating Committee define training needs and conduct training programs that aim at strengthening the organization by focusing on issues like leadership, critical analysis of traditional practices and customs, and the rights of women. Another fundamental strategy for strengthening organization and leadership has been participation in indigenous women's Latin American initiatives. The regional platform has made it possible for women to rely on a reference network that lends legitimacy to their national work and opens up opportunities for participation in a number of different international events. Many of the Coordinating Committee's efforts have been geared towards strengthening their leadership and gaining recognition as an important part of the indigenous movement. The CNMI has also promoted the participation of indigenous women in diverse forums of the feminist movement, both nationally and internationally, in order to align their goals with international feminist ideals. The tie with the feminist movement has been an im-

portant factor in the analysis of its position with indigenous women and has allowed the Coordinating Committee to weave an important network of alliances.

The Coordinating Committee has had great success in establishing itself as the only national movement of indigenous women that has consolidated itself as a touchstone for the defense of their rights. Their work over the last ten years has made a tremendous impact on the lives of women, their communities, and organizations of the indigenous movement. Women that participate in the Coordinating Committee have been able to empower themselves in different spheres of life. Many of these women have begun to exert more leadership in positions of community authority and in mixed organizations in the national indigenous movement. Some members of the Coordinating Committee have even been called on by political parties to run for public office and to head popular mobilizations. In the international sphere, the leadership and presence of indigenous women has increased considerably from the time the Coordinating Committee was formed. Despite the opposition of many male indigenous leaders, both the participation and the agenda of women in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Affairs of the United Nations is now an established reality.

The indigenous women's movement in Mexico and Latin America has played an important role in strengthening the feminist movement. The dialogue carried on in various meetings and forums between feminists and indigenous women's activists has led to many advances that includes broadening the comprehension of how to relate gender identity to other identities; dismantling the view of indigenous women as a vulnerable group lacking the ability and power to bring about changes in their own condition; and recognizing the need to create alliances with other social movements. The critical analysis by indigenous women of traditional customs has led to an acknowledgement of historical questions raised about these practices by feminists regarding their damaging effects on women's lives. It has also encouraged feminists to discard some of their stereotypes about indigenous cultures and to recognize their contribution to the struggle against the ruling system.

Conclusion

The agenda, strategies, leadership, and alliances of indigenous women who have come together in the National Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Women now present an opportunity for overcoming social polarization, reconstructing the social fabric from new bases of support, and advancing towards the construction of an inclusive, plural society and a State that guarantees human rights. The voice of the indigenous women of Mexico resounds more intensely day by day and there's no doubt that these women have become a fundamental political actor in re-founding the nation. The tremendous opposition and obstacles that they face are undeniable, but although their presence is uncomfortable for some, it is a reality that no one can deny.

The complexity of the Indigenous women's achievement is well summed up in this quote from Proyecto Colectivo:

"The new spaces for participation, the multiple dialogues established with various social actors, and a new approach to the rights of women and the rights of indigenous peoples, have necessarily upset gender roles.... All these organizational spaces - whether independent or governmental - may be conceived of as spaces for the production of meaning, a process that has led indigenous women, intentionally or unintentionally, to reflect on their condition, thereby producing an interchange between gender, ethnicity, and social class."

- Proyecto Colectivo[2]

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2. Proyecto Colectivo, "Viejos y Nuevos Espacios de Poder: Mujeres Indígenas, Organización Colectiva y Resistencia Cotidiana."

Against All Odds: The Building of a Women's Movement in the Islamic Republic of Iran
A Summary of the Case Study by Homa Hoodfar

The question of women and gender over the last century has become one of the most frequently debated and highly charged issues in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Such debate in itself is seen as a challenge to the Islamic Republic since in its view, God has ordained women to be wives and mothers and they are to be part of their father's and husband's fiefdom with very limited rights. The state vision and its legal components have been taken to task by Iranian women of various ideological tendencies. Women activists have made a careful analysis of the political context and have set an agenda based on their diagnosis of the rights and the wrongs of women. This case study outlines how women's advocates, over two decades of decentralized and informal/ semi-formal activities, have worked towards mobilizing women and building a robust women's movement.

1979: Women and the Iranian Revolution

After almost a century of struggle, women in Iran, despite the strong opposition of religious leaders were finally enfranchised in 1963. In 1967, the first Family Law reform known as the Family Protection Law gave women minimal rights with regards to issues of divorce and custody of children. Women also played a key role in the revolution in 1979 which ultimately led to the fall of the Shah's regime. However, despite their role in the success of the revolution, Iranian women were among the biggest losers with the advent of the new theocratic Islamic Republic's regressive gender ideology. Within two weeks of coming to power, the supreme leader of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, annulled the Family Protection Law. Within a month of his return to Iran, Khomeini announced that in accordance with Islamic tradition women were barred from becoming judges and two female witnesses were the equivalent of one male. A few days after this announcement, Khomeini declared that women should wear the veil (hijab) at the workplace. This was followed by the segregation of all sporting events and then of public transit.

To protest these actions women activists organised several demonstrations and a rally of thousands of women on March 8th, International Women's Day. The rally attracted public attention and support, as well as mobs of religious zealots and paramilitary forces, which under the protec-

tion of security forces attacked and injured many protesters. By the start of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) many of the women who had remained active were jailed or forced into exile. By 1981 the regime had dismantled nearly all the rights that women had secured between 1900 and 1979. The only major right women retained was the right to vote, which the regime reasoned would work to its benefit since it still exercised a considerable religious hold over a large segment of women.

1980-1988: Changing Conditions and New Forms of Resistance

The end of organized resistance was not the end of women's opposition to the discriminatory treatment of women by the new regime. Their strategy was to adopt methods that could mobilize women broadly against the new measures. Clearly issues of family law would cut across class and ethnicity as it had disadvantaged all women, and thus could be a rallying point for mobilization. While the secularists focused on critiquing the regime's discriminatory gender ideology, most women in the country were willing to give the regime a chance. The voices of many young widows of war martyrs, who faced losing their children to their husband's family in accordance with the Muslim law, joined in critiquing the regime. Thousands of stories about the unfair treatment of women were circulated in the public sphere through newspapers, women's

magazines, and women's religious gatherings at home and in mosques. Lacking any formal political or legal clout, these were the only channels for these women to cultivate public support against these injustices.

The initial indication that these strategies were achieving some impact came when Khomeini finally announced in 1985, that widows of martyrs may retain custody of their children, even if they remarried. A second victory was the introduction of a new marriage contract specifying situations whereby women could apply for divorce as well as leaving room for stipulating other conditions such as the right to work or to continue their education.

1989-1996: Lobbying: a New Phase of Activism

The end of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) and the death of Khomeini opened up a new chapter in Iranian politics. No longer could the regime use the war as an excuse for failure to deliver promised socio-economic improvements. Women hoped that the Ayatollah's absence would make the regime more concerned about its legitimacy.

Perhaps the most outstanding legal reform that women achieved during this period was the passing of a bill for wages for house work, a campaign that had started in the late 1980s to compensate women who had found themselves divorced after many years of marriage, often because their husbands were interested in younger wives. Several prominent women, including the daughter of President Rafsanjani, championed the bill and finally, despite bitter opposition from orthodox religious leaders, wages for housework, *ojrat ol-mesal,* was passed in December 1991.

1997-2005

By 1997 the contradiction between the regime's stated gender ideology and the imposition of its purportedly Muslim laws on women was one of the most widely debated issues in public discourse. During the 1997 presidential election women voters participated in unprecedented numbers and

the great majority voted for the most liberal candidate, Khatami, who was least favoured by the establishment. More than 78% of all eligible women cast their ballots, voting for the candidate who seemed most likely to initiate reform.

While social restrictions on women had lessened under the reformist government, many women were greatly disillusioned by the failure to achieve any legal reform. However, the 2003 Nobel Prize for Peace bestowed on Iranian lawyer Shirin Ebadi, a long-time democrat and women's and children's rights activist, created a wave of pride and optimism, and a renewed energy in Iran and within the women's movement. Following the euphoria created by Ebadi's Nobel Prize, several joint meetings between various women's organizations were held to discuss priorities, demands and reforms.

The fact that the reformists failed to make any promises or statements of support, fearing the criticism of the conservatives, resulted in large numbers of women, particularly in Tehran, boycotting the election in 2005. At the same time conservative forces mobilized support in smaller cities, towns and rural regions whose populations tended to be more traditional and conservative. These two factors resulted in the election of the most conservative religious candidate to the Presidency, whose position on gender roles was the most conservative and oppressive of any public or religious official since the passing of Khomeini in 1988.

Conclusion

The women's movement in Iran does not fit into the classic model of a centralized and coordinated organization with clear leaders. Neither does it subscribe to any grand theories. It is a movement that is organizationally ephemeral and in a constant state of flux - and thus hard to suppress. While individual acts of resistance in many instances render the states' attempt to control and repress ineffective, it also carries with it the danger of women loosing sight of the larger movement. However, the fact that this century-old movement has always and continues to transect class and ethnicity makes it one of the most dynamic women's movements in the region.

The Dalit Women's Movement in India: Dalit Mahila Samiti

A Summary of the Case Study by Jahnvi Andharia with the ANANDI Collective

History and Context

In India, the fight against "untouchability" is long standing, since this system of discrimination against lower castes has been deeply embedded in social, political and cultural tradition. People were deemed "untouchable" because the work they did involved handling "polluting" materials – e.g. animal hides (leather workers), garbage (cleaners), and human hair (barbers). The fight against this oppressive system was led by the greatest Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a brilliant lawyer from an untouchable caste who went on to draft the constitution of India. Untouchability was abolished and its practice made a punishable offence, and affirmative action policies were implemented by the Government of India to correct historical wrongs.

In the late Sixties, vibrant mass movements of these oppressed castes adopted the name "Dalit", which is derived from the Sanskrit root verb *dal,* meaning to crack or split. The term Dalit refers to those who have been broken, ground down by those above them in a deliberate way, and included all women, even of the highest castes, since all women were considered oppressed. The word also inherently denies the notions of *pollution* and *karma*[1] that were used to justify caste hierarchy and exclusion, and rejects the caste system as a whole. Nevertheless, Dalits still face considerable discrimination throughout India. The Dalits make up 16.2% of the total population, but their control over resources of the country is less than 5%. Close to half of the Dalit population lives under the Poverty Line and even more (62%) are illiterate. Moreover, Dalits are daily victims of the worst crimes and atrocities, far outnumbering other sections of society. In fact, between 1992 and 2000, a total of 334,459 cases were registered nation wide with the police as cognisable crimes against people of Scheduled Castes (SCs).

The Dalit Mahila Samiti

The Dalit Mahila Samiti (DMS) is an organisation of over 1500 Dalit women located in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP). DMS is promoted by Vanangana, a feminist NGO established in 1993 to build a grassroots movement that works to seek justice for marginalised women in UP, especially Dalit women. Vanangana soon felt the need for a separate local women's organisation with a clear Dalit identity, and the Dalit Mahila Samiti was born in 2002.

Goals

- To change the caste equations in the area/region where they work;
- To promote the leadership of local women;
- To protest against all forms of violence;
- To strategize during election time with members of the upper caste on their own terms to further Dalits women's interests;
- To ensure that the benefits of the government schemes announced under the Dalit party in power flows to all eligible Dalits.

Structure

The leadership of Dalit Mahila Samiti is still evolving and the demarcations of leadership and decision-making are quite fluid. The DMS leaders have developed the ability to organize their work independently, and know when to seek support

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1. Fate or pre-determined destiny.

from Vanangana. The primary decisions about which cases to take and strategies to be adopted are taken by DMS leaders. Every village has two women who are selected by the members of the local DMS group, to represent them at the cluster level. Each Cluster in turn elects a *Adhyaksh* (President), *Koshaadhyaksh* (Treasurer) and a *Sachiv* (Secretary). Similarly at the block level there is a President, Treasurer and Secretary. All the cluster leaders meet once a month to share their experiences and take decisions collectively, and matters that need further discussion are taken to the block level. Representatives from Vanangana attend these meetings and offer information and guidance as required.

Strategies

DMS women are using nuanced but powerful strategies to challenge untouchability and concepts of impurity. DMS performers go from village to village enacting plays that create awareness about the issue of untouchability. They then enrol women members who pledge to work to end such practices; they also invite men to become "sathidars" – givers of support. DMS is also working on changing discriminatory practices at the household and individual level – they insist, for instance, that Dalit and non-Dalit people share drinking water and eat together, which in turn pushes families to change untouchability practices based on their new understanding of the concepts of purity and impurity (which traditionally reinforce untouchability). Most violence-related cases come through the Dalit Mahila Samiti, and the leadership adopt a strategy of scrutinizing the various elements at play in the case. These are discussed in their various forums – at the cluster-level, and if required, at the regional level. By sharing information, DMS builds solidarity and communicates the support of a larger movement to the victim. In addition, the movement is working on government schemes such as Midday

Meals for schoolchildren, to ensure that Dalit children are seated and fed alongside children of other castes.

Achievements

The achievements of the Dalit Mahila Samiti are many. It has been a major contributor to the formation and development of a Dalit women's identity, which has helped expand the Dalit movement. The women are aware of the political shifts occurring at the state level with a Dalit woman having become Chief Minister of the state of Uttar Pradesh, but are also alert to the local challenges at hand. The collective nature of the leadership of DMS is a major strength as it is based on collective decision making and not on one or two charismatic leaders. The leadership also comes from a large geographical area, and draws on the extensive experience of many women. Several important cases clearly illustrate the successes of the DMS in exemplifying how the Samiti will fight until justice is won for Dalits in UP. For example, in the ground-breaking case of the murder of a Dalit political activist, the women of DMS in partnership with Vanangana played a crucial role in ensuring that his upper-caste murderers were arrested and punished. Another example was the case of an expectant Dalit woman who was ruthlessly beaten by three upper-caste women. Both these cases were followed closely by the local media and administration, and had it not been for the DMS, they would have been forgotten.

Today, the DMS-Vanangana partnership is a critical force in strengthening and expanding the Dalit women's movement. This movement of over 1500 women from a remote area in a very feudal, backward part of India has shown its power to challenge injustice and oppression, and enhance equality, justice and dignity for both Dalit women and men.

Domestic Workers Organizing in the United States
A Summary of the Case Study by Andrea Cristina Mercado and Ai-jen Poo

History and Context

Domestic workers in the United States, after several centuries of exclusion from recognition as a real workforce, are fighting to gain respect and power nationally. Domestic workers have played a critical role in the development of economic and social life in the United States. Historically, this workforce has its roots in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the plantation economy that provided the resources and materials for industrialization in the United States. Throughout industrialization, women's work in the home also remained invisible and unrecognized. While serving as a foundation for the growth of the economy, domestic work has consistently been rendered invisible, deliberately and repeatedly excluded from recognition or protection from abuse under the United States labour law. The fact that domestic workers have traditionally been women of colour and immigrant women is also significant since their exploitation represents a key front in the feminist movement as it necessitates understanding and organizing against race, gender and class-based oppression at once.

Despite the critical role that domestic workers play in the current global political economy, in the US they have remained excluded from most basic labour protections and live and work essentially at the whim of their employer. Domestic workers in the United States are predominantly immigrants and women of colour who work long hours for low-wages, without overtime pay, and under extremely isolated conditions. The vast majority of domestic workers struggle to defend their most basic human rights. In New York, for example, 33% of workers surveyed in 2005 face some form of abuse from their employers.[1] There are no standards in the domestic work industry, and the few basic laws that do apply to domestic workers are not enforced. Domestic workers have been left with no choice but to organize, against all odds. It is within this context that organizations fighting for domestic worker rights in the United States have formed.

The National Workers Domestic Alliance

In June, 2007, over 50 domestic workers from countries of the Global South, now working in US cities, met in Atlanta, Georgia as part of the first United States Social Forum (USSF) for a National Domestic Worker Gathering. Across language barriers and cultural divides, the women shared experiences from organizing in their corners of the country. On the final day of the gathering these household workers decided to form a National Domestic Worker Alliance.

The National Domestic Worker Alliance is composed of grassroots organizations that work towards advancing the rights of domestic/household workers. The goals of this newly formed alliance are to:

1. Collectively bring public attention to the plight of domestic/household workers;

2. Bring respect and recognition to the workforce;

3. Improve workplace conditions; and

4. Consolidate the voice and power of domestic workers as a workforce.

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1. Domestic Workers United, "Home Is Where the Work Is: Inside New York's Domestic Work Industry": New York, Data Centre and Domestic Workers United, 2006.

Many of the organizations were already working together to advance these goals. California household worker organizations fought for a state bill that was vetoed by governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2006. In New York, organizations joined forces to pass New York City legislation compelling employment agencies that place domestic workers to educate workers about their rights and employers about their legal obligations in 2003. Currently, they are working together to pass a state-wide Domestic Worker Bill of Rights to establish labour standards including a living wage, health care and basic benefits. The coming together of these organizations has exponentially increased the capacity, visibility and influence of domestic workers as a sector in the social justice movement. Organizations in Miami, Chicago, San Antonio, and Baltimore are reaching out to begin a process of organizing domestic workers locally, and seeking the support of the National Alliance. In addition, other sectors, including the labour movement, are beginning to recognize the strategic role this workforce plays in rebuilding the labour movement.

Strategies

While the National domestic Workers alliance does not have a collective strategy, its member organizations such as the Mujeres Unidas y Activas (MUA) in California and the Domestic Workers United (DWU) in New York, are each working to build the power of the domestic workforce. They have similar strategies in that they provide a group setting for workers to share their experiences and help them become empowered to fight for immigrant, women and workers' rights. They draw on strengths of women members as peer mentors, group facilitators, community educators, and organizers. Member-led research on industry working conditions is a crucial part of their work at the local level which they use to share lessons and information about organizing domestic workers. They also place importance on leadership development that supports the political leadership of domestic workers in the organization and the broader movement. These organizations have also conducted several campaigns including lobbying for crucial legislation in their states. In fact, the DWU's Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, if passed, will be the most comprehensive legislation protecting domestic workers in US history.

Achievements

While full of challenges and young in its current stage of development, domestic worker organizing in the US has already impacted the broader social justice movement politically, practically and culturally. Practically speaking, domestic workers leadership has already challenged a culture of patriarchy, classism and racism in society as a whole and within the social justice movement as well. This movement has opened the door for hundreds of working-class immigrant women of colour to exercise leadership-– organize, inspire and mobilize entire communities for a better future– thus proving that they are precisely the leadership that the social justice movement in the United States has been waiting for. Significantly, the first United States Social Forum was organized and heavily attended by member-based "movement" organizations, rooted in working class communities of colour - many of which are led by women. In many ways the USSF was a manifestation of a profound shift within the social justice movement in the United States, the product of several years of ground work, community organizing, leadership development, and alliance building.

While some of the leaders of this burgeoning movement may not have a strong identification with feminism, the character of their struggle is decidedly pro-women. On a daily basis they are demanding that "women's" work be recognized and valued, and they are practicing women's self-determination, asserting their right to make their own decisions and live with respect and dignity.

Culturally, domestic workers organizing has forced the social justice movement to value the many roles women play, as primary income earners, for families at home and abroad, and caregivers for their employers and their own children. Domestic workers have forced people to think more about the invisible labour that makes other work possible, and the importance of recognizing, respecting, and protecting this work under basic human rights principles. In the words of Domestic Workers United members, "We have a dream that one day; all work will be valued equally."

Challenges Were Many:
The One in Nine Campaign, South Africa
A Summary of the Case Study by Jane Bennett[1]

History and Context

The history of the women's movement in South Africa is usually described as one that is interlinked with resistance to colonialism and apartheid through the twentieth century. Prior to 1990, feminist analyses of political, cultural, and economic spaces were embedded within different orientations that were struggling to end apartheid. However, in the years immediately preceding 1994 (when the apartheid state was formally dismantled), there was sufficient consensus between different activists and organizations to create a powerful National Women's Charter. The Charter acted as a platform to lobby the new government for concrete provisions towards gender justice. Through the National Women's Charter the women's movement garnered a number of achievements including legal, political and financial reform. Between 1999 (after the first five year wave of enthusiasm about the new state) and 2005, it has been argued that women's movement organizing suffered. It struggled for coherence and connection in the rapids of escalating poverty, lost momentum and concern about both state capacity and will to transform the social and economic axes of power in a way which could realize gender equality "on the ground."

Moreover, the need to combat the transmission of HIV, to curtail sexual violence, and to ensure that women and girls have access to social and political rights has increasingly placed issues of sexuality at the forefront of the women's movement. The initiation of the One in Nine Campaign needs to be understood as rooted in a very specific national context – one of an increasingly difficult economic, political, and social environment in which women's movement organizing has been challenged by issues of direction, alliance, and sustainability; and the option of new frameworks for political activism which link issues of social justice through questions of gender equality and sexual rights.

The One in Nine Campaign (OINC)

The One in Nine Campaign was launched in February, 2006, at the start of the trial of Jacob Zuma, former Deputy-President of South Africa, who was accused of raping an HIV positive woman friend of the Zuma family. At the time he was also on temporary leave of his official position in connection with another trial. The campaign was formed to express solidarity with the woman in question, as well as other women who speak out about rape and sexual violence. The name of the campaign is based on a South African Medical Research Council (MRC) study on sexual violence conducted in 2005 which indicated that only one out of every nine rape survivors report the attack to the police. This statistic prompted the name "One In Nine".

It further notes that statistics indicate that of the cases that *do* reach the courts, less than 5 % of the accused rapists are convicted.

Objectives and Strategies

The OINC states that their mission is to work with organizations and institutions involved in the issues of HIV/AIDS, violence against women, women's rights, human rights, and lesbian, gay and bisexual activism "to ensure that the issue of the sexual rights of all women is addressed." This is to be done through solidarity building, research, media, legal transformation and direct action. The objectives of the OINC include:

- Building solidarity: To popularize sexual rights with a focus on women's right to sexual autonomy and safe consensual sex;

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1. African Gender Institute, University of Cape Town.

- Research: to develop a research agenda to effectively monitor and research social and legal aspects of sexual violence and their implications for policy and practice;

- Media: to harness the power of print and electronic media to educate and inform key institutions and the public about legal and social dimensions of sexual violence;

- Legal transformation: to lobby for the transformation of the justice system and the legal framework so that women who speak out are able to access justice in all stages of the chain;

- Direct action: to demonstrate direct support and solidarity with women who speak out against sexual violence.

In the time since the Jacob Zuma trial, the OINC has undertaken on-going public and media activism to highlight the intransigence of the court system in processing the hearings of rape victims, protesting outside courts, creating petitions, supporting legal interventions, organizing "bus campaigns" of publicity, and focusing on particular cases to develop strategic focus. In July 2007, two lesbian activist women returning from a celebratory function were assassinated in Johannesburg. With some new organizational partners, the OINC took on the primary organization of the *07-07-07 protest*, organizing public activism, building solidarity, monitoring the legal case, and creating a range of resources (including virtual resources) to support the movement to protest the murders.

Leadership and Structure

There is a consortium of organizations which manage the leadership of the Campaign and the management of the leadership is participative, formally requiring consensus from all participants to address particular issues and strategies, but simultaneously drawing on the available energy and programmatic availability of different organizations. The OINC is led by diverse women, with backgrounds in law, conflict negotiation, sexuality and reproductive rights, HIV, gender-based violence, and most with personal backgrounds of economic struggle (of different kinds). From its initiation, the OINC was consciously building a movement, drawing on the political strengths and areas of expertise of different organizations which had never before been drawn, formally, into a coalition.

The OINC's terms of reference, that were developed in the months after the Jacob Zuma rape trail, which came to a formal close (May, 2006), are explicit about the feminist principles informing the Project, to which all members must adhere, and include: (i) The campaign shall be driven and sustained by women's leadership that aims to create equal power relations within the campaign, through good and democratic governance practices, based on feminist principles of shared leadership and joint decision-making; (ii) the ideological premise for all campaign actions and governance shall be feminism, especially that the personal is political, and (iii) campaign actions will be based on the intersectionality of various forms of oppression

Achievements

The effects of the OINC's work have been powerful. Public protests were organized in 4 major cities after the lesbian activist murders, and integrated into the platforms of a range of different organizations' work. The combination of the experience of the activism during the Jacob Zuma trial and the outrage of the assassination of the activists (not the first in South Africa as a result of homophobia targeting black lesbians in particular) have both invigorated the coalition, but also led to new demands on coalition members for "holding" the direction of the movement-building. The OINC is a movement-building organization working in a new South African era, where the importance of acknowledging the failure of the defeat of apartheid for women (especially poor black women) is traumatizing, especially to those who worked hard to establish the National Gender machinery, or to reform different laws. The OINC discourse and activism have had a powerful impact on the meaning of feminist organizing in South Africa, taking the leadership around definitions of feminist strategy in a way that is influencing the understanding of the visibility and range of a women's movement.

> "Challenges were many, but I think what carried us through was the dream of a better world and the fact that we were creating it together. We debated, we supported each other, we challenged the donor community to join hands with us and not just hand out to us."- Fatma Alloo, founding member, TAMWA (Tanzanian Media Women's Organization)

Mothers as Movers and Shakers: The Network of Mother Centres in the Czech Republic
A Summary of the Case Study by Suranjana Gupta

History and Context

The Czech Mothers movement began in 1992 with a small group of mothers trying to counter their isolation and find ways to collectively care for their children. Today it is a sophisticated, mass-based women's civil society movement, growing from one Mothers Centre in Prague to a nation-wide network of over 250 Mother Centres that meet the practical needs of families with young children, while collectively working on a broader set of values that demonstrate why and how Czech society must become 'family friendly'.

During the Soviet era, the socialist Czech state had always supported women to reconcile their productive and reproductive roles, and enabled them to join the workforce even though their access to employment was not on the same terms as men. With the transition to a market economy, women workers and mothers were particularly hard hit by the loss of social security, and it is against this backdrop of political and economic transition that the Czech Mother's movement was born. Motherhood was considered an integral part of womanhood, and rather than seeing work and family in opposition to one another, Czech women viewed their participation in the workforce as a key element of their family roles.

The Czech Mothers Network evolved from the Prague Mothers Group, a small, informal, underground organization of 20 mothers whose main concern was the poor air quality in Prague and how this was affecting the health of children growing up in the city. Inspired by the German Mother Centres they visited, the Prague Mothers started their first Mother Centre in 1992 in a room in the YMCA in Prague. Today, there are 252 such centres across the Czech Republic that have helped women politicize their roles as caregivers and use this as the basis of creating a strong political voice that influences public policy in response to grassroots women's priorities as both mothers and workers.

Structure and Goals

In March 2001, at the annual assembly of Czech Mothers, leaders were given the mandate to set up an autonomous association called the 'Network of Mother Centres in the Czech Republic'. By October of the same year, the Network was formally registered with the Ministry of the Interior. In March 2002, the First Plenary Assembly of the newly registered Network of Mother Centres in the Czech Republic elected their first Governing Council. Today, the Governing Council comprises a president and four vice-presidents, all elected by Mother Centres representatives, with each Centre having one vote. There is also an elected Governing Board that is accountable to the Governing Council for all its actions. The Network of Mother Centres currently focuses on the following issues:

- Bringing parenting and child-raising into the public domain by recognizing and making visible the social contribution women make through child care and rearing;

- Creating dialogue mechanisms that enable citizen-government engagement and collaboration; and

- Promoting new forms of community and infrastructure development that reflects the needs of families with children.

Strategies and Achievements

The Mother Centres played a crucial role in exposing the ways in which existing policies and practices leave mothers socially and economically marginalized, and by bringing childcare and

mothering into the public arena. The 252 Mother Centres currently federated and formalized as a network across villages, towns and cities, enables them to consolidate their identity, clearly articulate their principles and values, and hold a vision of the changes they want to bring about. The efforts of the Mother Centres have created spaces for women to undertake childcare collectively, access child-friendly infrastructure in their neighbourhoods, and influence legislation on social policy.

Through peer support, mentoring, and linkages, the Network of Mother Centres brings together women who advocate for their rights as citizens. These are ordinary women who are empowered to negotiate for public space, finance, and equal opportunities; to organize centres and manage their activities; engage in self-help and dialogue with government officials; and seek systems that respect and respond to family priorities. This helps to build women's self confidence so that they see themselves as caregivers, workers, *and* citizens who can improve the quality of life of children, families and communities. They are empowered to decide and shape priorities in ways that work for them.

In 1999, the Czech Mother Centres decided to join GROOTS International, a network of grassroots women's organizations, and the Huairou Commission, a coalition of grassroots networks and professional partners. The Czech Mothers' found that their membership in global networks with similar principles and values served to amplify their message and make women feel they are part of a larger struggle beyond their own local neighbourhoods and nations.

In 2001, the Czech Mothers were one of six women's empowerment organizations to participate in the Local to Local Dialogue, a global project developed by the Huairou Commission, in response to the needs of grassroots groups to organize and advance their priorities through dialogues with local government. The Czech Mothers used this opportunity to initiate and document the process by which the women in a small town called Breznice organized mothers and mobilized the support of

schools and local corporations to partner with the municipality to get a playground for their children. The Mother Centres have continued to organize Local to Local Dialogues and are currently in their fourth year of organizing them.

One of the most effective strategies used by the Czech Mother Centres to advance their agenda has been their campaign for a family-friendly society. Launched in 2004, the Family-Friendly Campaign seeks to draw attention to concrete ways in which the government can demonstrate its support to families through city planning around the safety of women and children; flexible jobs; and child-friendly public facilities and services. Most importantly, the Campaign brings grassroots women and their roles as mothers into the public sphere, supporting them to advocate on their own behalf. The Family-Friendly Campaign rewards and recognizes public facilities and businesses that create child-friendly spaces, childcare services, and flexible working conditions for mothers.

Conclusion

Mothers organizing around child rearing and public support for families with young children, have, by creating a large constituency, reclaimed and reframed issues, thus countering the power of the right wing, conservative forces who thrive on organizing around 'respecting and protecting the family' invariably in exclusionary, patriarchal ways. The movement breaks the class and gender biases against women as mothers by creating a critical mass of ordinary women who can articulate and demonstrate the value of their unpaid work. It also creates peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing and empowerment processes that women can manage themselves, while advancing public advocacy campaigns that force governments and the private sector to respond to their priorities. The Mother Centres movement is thus breaking critical new ground and mobilizing a constituency that traditional feminist movements have largely neglected.

The Demobilization of Women's Movements: The Case of Palestine

A Summary of the Case Study by Islah Jad

History and Context

It is now eight years since the beginning of the second Palestinian Uprising, or *intifada*, in September, 2000. It has been fifteen years since the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) following the signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993 between the state of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). This agreement ended almost half a century of conflict over the land of Palestine. The first *intifada* which began in 1987 was witness to a vibrant women's movement, which had managed to mobilize large numbers of both urban and rural women to undertake feminist-nationalist projects. However, in the past fifteen years this mass-based movement, which engaged women from grass-roots organizations throughout Palestine to work towards a combined feminist-nationalist agenda, has given way to a process of "NGO-ization". Initiated by members of the leftist political parties, NGO-ization is a term used to denote the process through which issues of collective concern are transformed into isolated projects, without consideration of the economic, social and political factors from which they arise. Given the strong mobilization of urban and rural women of all classes during the first *intifada*, it was shocking for the author to hear women leaders say, in 2002, "We are not organized". Clearly, the nascent state structures in the post-1993 era were ill-equipped to assist in the organization of people's resistance and women's movements. To illustrate the change from the early mass-based women's movement to the phenomenon of NGO-ization, two contrasting women's organizations in Palestine are examined.

The Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees (PFWAC)

Organization, Goals and Strategies

Founded in 1978, PFWAC was a powerful women's platform that engaged women's grass-roots organizations. Its agenda was to attain equal rights for women with men in the "public sphere", in terms of wages, job opportunities, education, and political participation. One of the most important ingredients for the success of PFWAC was its ability to link women's strategic interests and practical needs in its range of projects. On the one hand, they tried to provide services women wanted, such as economic independence through paid work, and day care and pre-school services. On the other, the income-generating projects had a stated commitment to group decision-making, and also created a politicized space shared with other women. Their goal was not charity but organization and mobilization. In addition, PFWAC wanted to increase its mass support and that of its parent party, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). The creation of income-generating projects for women and girls was also motivated by PFWAC's knowledge that in order to recruit village and working-class women, it would have to provide forms of engagement that women's families and communities would find acceptable.

Achievements and Decline

By 1987, PFWAC was a thriving organization and had established an extensive network of pre-schools and nurseries and employed more than 48 teachers and five directors, serving 1,504 children. PFWAC managed, to a great extent, to construct a group identity and referred to themselves as *binat al-'amal al-nissaei,* Daughters of Women's Action (i.e., PFWAC). They were empowered by their role in the national struggle and by a gender system in which the leftist secular parties were hegemonic

over mass organizations and over culture. Empowered by massive networks, they managed to establish links with women in cities, villages and refugee camps through their well-respected and eloquent leaders and their collective action. In such a climate, women in PFWAC were "overt" in their demands and interests and able to act as a group. They asserted that no liberation for the homeland would be possible without women's liberation, that women would work side by side with men for national liberation, and that they should receive equal pay for equal work.

However, the decline of popular grass-roots organizations, including PFWAC, started in the early nineties and was related to the decline of "institutional politics" (politics as practiced in political parties or unions), and the inability of the Palestine Authority to deliver on initial expectations. School teachers were not paid, pre-schools were closed, and many other services were terminated. The decline in institutional politics in the DFLP, in particular, was due to an internal split in the party over whether or not they should participate in peace negotiations with Israel. By September 1990, the DFLP and PFWAC had informally split into four organizations. The split reflected a larger polarization within Palestinian society over future directions, women being a part of this process.

The Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC)

The expansion of PFWAC in the mid-eighties had led to the creation of a sophisticated internal structure. Many specialized offices were established as part of the permanent bureaucracy to administer day-to-day activities. This move unexpectedly resulted in the proliferation of separate, apolitical NGOs. One of these was the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC), an organization, which was born within the structure of the PFWAC, but which then evolved into an independent centre with NGO status.

Organization, Goals and Strategies

WCLAC was formally established in 1992 and aimed to bridge the gap between the nationalist and social agenda previously neglected by women's organizations and activists who subsumed their feminism within nationalism. WCLAC claims to redress this imbalance by adopting a women's rights approach disconnected from the nationalist struggle, and providing different services and products that aim to transform existing gender relations by working on legislative reform. They also emphasize the need for professionals with specialized skills to push their work forward. It was seen, for instance, when they hired a specialist to give advice on the work of their kindergartens that the school would improve significantly. Furthermore, enhancing the relationship between the centre and both regional Arab and international institutions working for human rights in general and on women's rights in particular was construed as an important mission.

The mechanisms adopted to realize the organization's new objectives included workshops in legal literacy, provision of legal advice, counselling, and social and psychological help. WCLAC also embarked on documenting violations against women's rights, studying the status of women, and disseminating information on legal awareness and gender training for women leaders. It committed itself to cooperating with all centres and institutions working in the fields of legal aid and social, psychological, and health counselling for Palestinian women.

Achievements

The first years of professionalization led to a steady growth of WCLAC and to the organization's successes in fundraising; to the provision of valuable services to women in health, education, and legal literacy; and to the spread of more information on the legal status of women and their domestic situations, including domestic violence. However, with professionalization, WCLAC also witnessed a major shift in its mission and priorities. The well-integrated approach to the trio of oppressions (nation, class and gender) aimed at changing women's situation in society, as well as the direction of the national movement, as promoted by the initiators of the centre, was reduced to a legalistic approach in which the emphasis was put on the legal understanding of women's oppression.

The eruption of the second *intifada* in September 2000 put the projects of many women's or-

ganizations, including WCLAC, on hold. But their work on the gender agenda introduced WCLAC and similar women's NGOs to an important community of donors who look for suitable local actors to implement their agenda in the Middle East. The involvement in "peace process" activities by many NGOs, including WCLAC, allows them to acquire power and legitimacy. But since many of these NGO leaders had little history of involvement in the earlier nationalist struggles or in grassroots work, their legitimacy at home is often compromised.

Conclusion

This case study explores the inter-relationships and the terms of engagement between two different types of women's organizations: a mass-based women's movement and a newly emergent NGO sector. The "new" discourse, used by the NGO elite, might be interpreted to discredit old forms of organization and a means of co-opting popular organizations. The new NGO discourse has been used to forge a space in the public arena at the expense of the old mass-based organizations. The point here is to question if this purportedly "counter-hegemonic" discourse is deployed to increase or decrease women's social activism and their political power. In the final analysis, any counter-hegemonic discourse must take into account the totality of the historical situation, whether this is an ongoing military Occupation, an impotent Palestinian Authority, weakened political parties, weakened women's organizations, or the growing power of Islamic movements. NGO activism in Palestine does not have the capacity to do this.

The Piquetera/o Movement of Argentina

A Summary of the Case Study by Andrea D'Atri and Celeste Escati

The word "*piquetera*" or "*piquetero*" comes from the pickets or protests held by unemployed workers as they demanded work and opposed the rising unemployment rates devastating Argentina during the financial crisis in the 1990s. The *Piquetero* Movement today consists of various groups and organizations that essentially manage the unemployment subsidies provided by the State, and occasionally carry out joint street mobilizations. Nevertheless, this collection of organizations had an undeniable presence in the streets of Argentina during the late 1990s up until 2004, and their methods of struggle were used as an example by other social sectors and movements. Even though the *Piquetero* is not a key actor in current struggles, its pioneering methods have been deeply embedded in the tradition of struggle of the working class, student, and other social movements in the country. The development of the *Piquetero* Movement can be divided into three phases:

The Beginning

The *Piqueteros* movement began on December 16, 1993, with a popular revolt in the Santiago del Estero Province, involving government employees who hadn't been paid their salaries for three months. This phase of the movement was characterized by local protests across the country in response to unpopular government policies that left workers unpaid and unemployed. Citizens responded with mass blockades of important highways, attacks on government property, and fierce street battles against the National Gendarmes sent by the federal government to quash the protests. The *Piquetero* Movement of this period relied on two methods: the picket, for conducting the struggle, and the assembly – a pure form of direct democracy - for decision making. With a combination of both combative and democratic strategies, participants were able to outline a program of action that would meet their demands.

Although several studies agree that women formed an important part of the movement, and constituted a majority of those who put their bodies on the line in the blockades, there was little recognition of their role. In fact, recognized leaders, even those elected from within the movement, were most often men. However, women were able to incorporate demands relating to their everyday life into the list of grievances of the *Piquetero* Movement: for example, neighbourhood nursery schools, health care improvements, and tax exemptions for unemployed families. Some of these women were even elected as spokeswomen by the assemblies to enter into dialogue with authorities, politicians, and local functionaries, thereby becoming figures recognized by the movement as a whole.

The Second Phase

In this period the *Piquetero* Movement went from being an inorganic expression of the protests of state workers and others against the exclusion produced by neo liberal economic policies, to becoming an organized movement made up of territorial groups that came together in different coordinating bodies and political blocks. This "new" *Piquetero* Movement, present in the country's political and economic centre, emerged from social organizations with a prior history of struggle of their own, such as land takeovers and the formation of small cooperatives and mutual neighbourhood civil associations.

In 1997, unemployed people in the metropolitan area surrounding the national capital, known as the Greater Buenos Aires, blocked highways twenty-three times, while another fifty-four roadblocks were set up in the rest of the country. During this period, unemployed workers began to form their own organizations, giving rise to the first *Movimientos de Trabajadores Desocupados* (MTD), or Unemployed Workers Movements. The main

activities of these MTDs consisted of drawing up and presenting community work projects to local authorities in order to receive subsidies and loans for micro-enterprises, organizing unemployed people in the area, and fighting to obtain government "employment plans" for food, gas, etc.

In 1992, the government of the Buenos Aires province had organized thousands of unemployed workers to implement assistance plans. More than 35,000 women, who came to be known as an "army of *manzaneras"* acted as coordinators between the food distribution project of the provincial government and the families who benefited from this aid. Women were chosen because the government felt that women would be more honest and that they would do a better job of making the distribution of resources transparent. This massive *manzaneras* network was later capitalized upon by the *Piquetero* Movement, with women joining the MTDs en masse, as a result of which women achieved a greater degree of visibility during this period. Women were also able to take the struggle against domestic violence into their own hands through the *Piquetero* movement. Women would take "persuasive action" against the aggressor by visiting his home to talk to him about why he shouldn't continue to act this way, about the way his companion suffers, etc. In some cases, when these measures did not produce favorable results, the women would remove the aggressors from their homes by force.

Another internationally recognized phenomenon occurred during this period when, in the face of bankruptcy, factory closings, or factory abandonment by the owners, men and women workers decided to occupy the plants and run them "without a boss". This phenomenon extended to hundreds of businesses, most of them small or medium-sized, which, in time, became cooperatives. The Zanon workers[1], who pioneered the "without a boss" method of protest, became an example to imitate in other factories that were taken over. They decided to incorporate more workers into the plant and that the new workers should be members of the MTDs. In this way, they established an alliance with the *piquetero* movement that allowed the latter, in turn, to come to their defense in case of legal efforts to evict them from the factories or if the police or union bureaucracy attacked them. These workers showed that they were capable of resolving the problem of lack of work, and that unfair business interests were solely responsible for their being unpaid or unemployed.

The *Piquetero* Movement Today

During the past few years there has been notable growth in the Argentine economy, primarily based on the international price of raw materials. This economic growth has lowered unemployment rates and considerably raised consumption levels, primarily benefiting the upper and middle classes. The government was also able to increase tax revenues, which in turn strengthened its policy of subsidies, incentives, and credits for the sectors of the *Piquetero* Movement that were willing to abandon the struggle in the streets. Through repression, at first, and then through cooptation, the government was able to fragment, dismember, and demobilize the *Piquetero* Movement. Only a small minority of the *piquetero* organizations continue to confront the government and the regime's institutions.

Nevertheless, the experiences of struggle against unemployment and dire poverty have served as an example to millions of workers who witnessed the loss of employment opportunities during the implementation of neo liberal policies in Argentina. They also represent a tradition of struggle that will be renewed by the working class in the case of possible economic crisis in the future. For thousands of women, this experience has marked their entry into public life and the transformation of their everyday domestic lives. However, it remains to be seen how the sacrifices made by these women will impact future generations of girls raised by these mothers who "put their bodies on the line" in roadblocks, unintentionally confronting ancestral models and stereotypes.

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1. Zanon Ceramics was one of South America's largest producers of ceramics and *porcellanato* floors located in the Neuquén Province of Argentina

GROOTS Kenya
A Summary of the Case Study by Awino Okech

Founded in 1995, GROOTS Kenya emerged from the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing, China. It provides a lens through which we can examine the question of what a cohesive women's movement might be in Kenya. However, what differentiates GROOTS Kenya from the others is that it names itself as a movement and not as a network or NGO, which other groups with similar approaches do.

Organisation Structure

GROOTS Kenya can perhaps be best described as a network of over 500 self-help groups who consistently move in and out of its operating space depending on their needs. GROOTS Kenya is structured around a secretariat located in Nairobi. This acts as a quasi-infrastructural base from which all the regions link through projects or support structures. There is also a Board, whose role is to give strategic direction to their work. Annually, all regional members come together at a retreat, where they share with each other their challenges, experiences and opportunities on the ground and their vision for the following year. The regional groups consistently inform the strategic direction of the organization, and their involvement is multi-faceted. In addition, through regional focal point leaders, mentorship and direction is provided to the sub groups, so that there is regular consultation and inflow of information from focal point leaders, to the secretariat and back to the various groups in the region.

Strategies and Achievements

GROOTS Kenya works within four thematic areas:

- Community Responses to HIV/AIDS - The advocacy and programmatic activities involve supporting communities through training and capacity building of women. This has invariably led to supporting orphans;
- Community Resources and Livelihood - Through this program, communities are led through processes of analysing and mobilising local resources;
- Women and Property Programme - This is GROOTS Kenya's flagship programme. The emphasis in this programme is on safeguarding property rights of women and orphans;
- Women Leadership and Governance – Through this programme they aim to encourage grassroots women leaders in helping them share their skills and hold those in government accountable.

Organising in GROOTS Kenya is largely centred on strategic interventions in selected advocacy settings, although most of their work is done at the grassroots level. The grassroots work has not adopted protest-oriented action as a key mechanism to achieving their goals but rather, emphasis has been laid on lobbying and advocacy.

GROOTS Kenya's biggest strategic alliance has been its membership in the global network of GROOTS International. This has created space for their entry into the international world. They often partner with GROOTS International to conduct international advocacy. At an international level, they are known as an organization that takes grassroots women abroad. GROOTS Kenya has been one of the lead organizations pushing for a change in Africa from traditional NGO organizing towards having grassroots women at the forefront of advocacy, with NGOs providing back up support. They are also entering into a partnership with UNDP and GROOTS International, to create innovative audit systems that ensure that the contribution of grassroots women is accounted for financially – i.e., putting a dollar value on their volunteer work. The fact that GROOTS Kenya has been able to send grassroots women to international conferences – such as UN Habitat or WSSD+10 - has changed wider perceptions about grassroots women and their

capacity to contribute to local, national and global debates.

GROOTS Kenya hesitates to label itself as a "feminist organisation" since international concepts such as feminism are not well internalised in African society. Moreover, there exists no clear definition of feminism, as feminist agendas are diverse and extensive. Nonetheless, most feminists would concur that their activism, research and praxis is driven by the general insight that the nature of women's experiences as individuals and as social beings, their contributions to work, culture and knowledge, have been systematically ignored or misrepresented by mainstream discourses in different areas. If this was to be taken as a broad working definition, there are ways in which the agenda, strategies and ethos adopted by GROOTS Kenya in its approach to grassroots solidarity building could certainly be considered feminist.

In actual fact, GROOTS Kenya sees itself first and foremost as a community development organization, reinforced by the fact that most of the organizations they have closely worked with are not institutions that would be viewed in Kenya as gender oriented or feminist in nature. GROOTS Kenya has been unable to detach itself from being a service delivery organisation. Its "practical needs" approach is in response to its constituency – groups in rural and peri-urban settings who have not benefited from the gains of development and who suffer from a lack of access to resources. Nonetheless, GROOTS Kenya has also advanced its constituency's strategic interests by ensuring that they are critical to shaping and influencing change in these areas.

Conclusion

In exploring GROOTS Kenya within the context of movements, it is clear that it initially emerged as an NGO. Its inception was not based on collective thinking amongst the groups that now form part of its 'membership'. Nevertheless, if we apply the framework of New Movements theory, GROOTS Kenya *has* built a movement since it has enabled grassroots women to build a new identity, through access to hitherto non-existent leadership opportunities, or visibility at local and international forums where their voices were largely absent.

In the Kenyan context, the seemingly fragmented nature of women's organising often beguiles people into thinking a women's movement is non-existent. If indeed there is no women's movement in Kenya, how do we qualify the numerous voices located around the country – such as GROOTS Kenya - that organise sporadically around women's rights issues? However, if women's rights activism in Kenya is to move to the next level, then there is a need for concerted efforts towards building coalitions and national alliances around sustaining ideas.

But the politics of exclusion and inclusion generally, and due to geography specifically, continue to be a problem that causes major rifts in what could otherwise be a coherent women's movement in Kenya. For this reason, there are many ways in which the work that GROOTS Kenya is doing is laudable, in terms of its efforts at building a grassroots based movement that spans geographical and ethnic divides of Kenya.

The European Romani Women's Movement – International Roma Women's Network
A Summary of the Case Study by Rita Izsak

Situation and Context

Romani[1] women throughout Europe continue to face various forms of discrimination in their everyday lives. They face discrimination based not only on their ethnicity but on their gender as well. There is a dire lack of access to education and healthcare and women are expected primarily to be caretakers of the household. Girls are often forced into early and arranged marriages, and subjected to virginity tests. Women face domestic violence and the danger of being forced into prostitution. There is an urgent need for targeted policies and strategies to remedy the situation of extreme vulnerability that Romani women are living with on a daily basis. This case study discusses the efforts of two major Roma women's organizations to tackle the oppression, exploitation and discrimination faced by Romani women throughout Europe.

The International Romani Women's Network (IRWN): Organisation and Structure

The idea of creating an international Romani women's network first arose in November 2002 when several Romani and non-Romani women from approximately twenty European countries came together in Vienna. The conference was held to discuss access to healthcare in Roma communities, with special emphasis on Romani women. The participants then decided to create an international Romani women's network and IRWN was officially launched on March 8th, 2003, on International Women's day, to demonstrate the organization's commitment to women's rights. It has members from each Romani community; Roma, Sinti, Gypsies and Travellers, and from 18 European countries, making IRWN the first and only international umbrella organization representing Romani women of *all* Romani groups from most countries of Europe.

Goals and Strategies

The objectives of IRWN, as outlined in their Statute, are the following:

- To improve the overall situation of Roma women and lobby governments in Europe towards the same end;
- To challenge individual and institutional discrimination at all levels, more specifically discrimination in housing, healthcare, education and employment;
- To give visibility to Roma women, and to articulate their agenda and to attain basic human rights;
- To ensure that our culture is recognized, respected, and resourced;
- To partner with governments to solve issues faced by Roma women and to garner support from international organizations and institutions.

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1. Editor's note: The Roma – popularly called "Gypsies" in derogatory terms –are one of the oldest diaspora communities in the world, having migrated to Europe from the north-western part of India in the 11th century A.D. and onwards. They are a distinct racial and ethnic minority, whose numbers are estimated to be currently 7 – 9 million, the majority of whom live in Eastern Europe and Russia. For hundreds of years, they were itinerant, though now they are largely settled communities living mainly in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Despite their long-standing location there, they resisted cultural assimilation, maintaining the language and traditions they brought with them, including a rigid patriarchal structure more similar to that of the Indian subcontinent than of Europe.

IRWN uses various strategies that help them work towards achieving these goals. These include: (i) fact-finding missions intended to monitor the human rights situation faced by Roma women; (ii) a detailed database on these women; (iii) information on international and domestic legislation and case law; and (iv) using all available legal means to assist Roma women.

Achievements and Challenges

One of IRWN's most visible achievements is the regular communication and news-sharing facilitated through its list-serve. Although there are no yearly average statistics available, between March and September 2007 alone, 120 information e-mails were sent out to 170 subscribers. From the time of its formation, IRWN has participated in lobbying efforts at various levels and as a result, is now a founding member of the first democratically elected international Roma entity, the European Roma and Traveller Forum (ERTF). It is also a member of the European Women's Lobby, where it has one delegate in the General Assembly. These membership opportunities were achieved through personal contacts and individual lobbying efforts undertaken by IRWN members.

Even though it has been five years since its inception, IRWN continues to face major challenges. The organization has no office, no paid staff, no website, and for some years had no funding at all. This is why IRWN undertakes very few activities on its own, and has to depend on the information and activities gathered by / of its members. Due to the lack of funding, IRWN has been unable to set up a work plan or strategy for its operations, and cannot articulate its own distinct vision or strategies for achieving its objectives.

The Joint Roma Women Initiative (JRWI) of the Open Society Institute

This Initiative was launched in 1999 by the Network Women's Programme (NWP) initiative of the Open Society Institute (OSI), which promotes the advancement of women's human rights, gender equality, and empowerment as an integral part of the process of democratization. JRWI focuses on policy development, the integration of women's perspectives into the main Romani movement and works to create links between Roma women and mainstream women's rights movements.

One of JRWI's main achievements is the creation of a database of Romani women activists who work to promote the rights of Roma women. In addition, it has run numerous trainings and workshops, as well as a virginity project conducted in seven countries aimed at promoting freedom of choice and gender equality. JRWI also launched a project in 2006 in 11 European countries to enhance the grassroots networking of Roma women.

One of the most laudable achievements of both IRWN and JWRI is the joint statement they issued in May 2006, endorsed by 26 Romani women from 10 different countries. This was the first time that Roma women from different countries, backgrounds, groups and ages managed to make a distinction regarding what is part of Romani culture, and what is a characteristic of more widespread patriarchal traditions that Roma – and other - women have to fight against. The joint women's statement was a milestone in that it challenged the thinking of Romani women themselves.

Conclusion

In building a movement one has to start by building local and national networks. However, in the field of Roma rights, the fact is that many organizations formed as a result of available funds from large international donors and do not have a firm base at the grassroots or community level. If IRWN and JRWI had the support of donor organizations to dialogue and come up with a concrete action plan for the upcoming years, this would enable them to actually start building a movement. These two initiatives can reach out to Roma communities wherever they may be and this unique potential should be used to influence European and national policies that target or affect Romani women.

Chapter 3

Lessons to Learn: Insights From Ten Case Studies of Women´s Movements
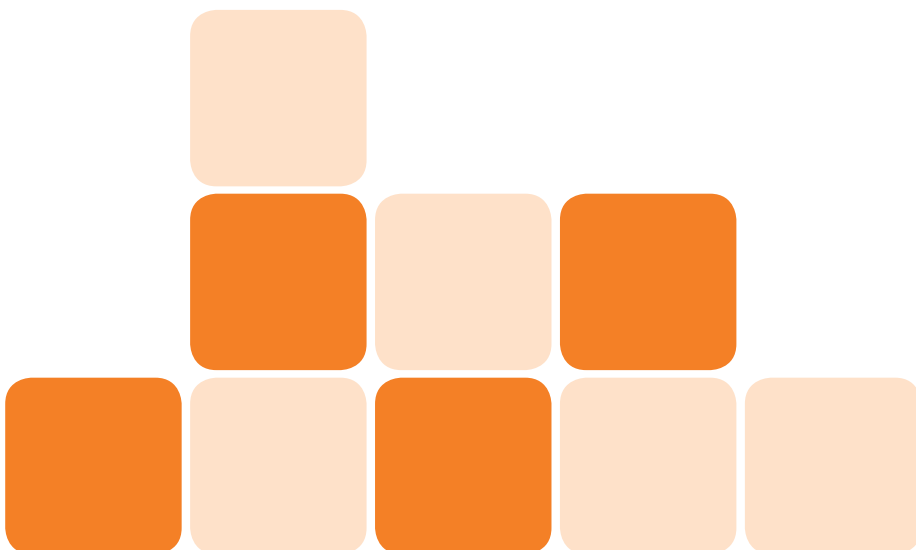
Chapter 3: Lessons to Learn

Insights From Ten Case Studies of Women's Movements

Srilatha Batliwala[1]

The wealth of information, insight, and learning contained in the case studies of ten women's movements around the world commissioned by AWID's BFEMO initiative is overwhelming. Their diversity at every level, and in every facet was daunting – political and social contexts, the issues and interests that triggered their formation, the methods used to mobilize and build the movements, the strategies they used to advance their cause, the multiplicity of targets they engaged and advocated with, the challenges and setbacks they faced, and the extraordinary range of their achievements. This attempt to systematize their lessons and guidance cannot entirely do justice to them, but helps us distil key messages to inform our thinking and action with respect to building movements.

Historical and Political Contexts

The greatest diversity among our case studies is the range of socio-political and historical contexts in which they have arisen. The various movements and their political contexts could be categorized as follows:

- Post-colonial states with neo-liberal democracies (India, Kenya, South Africa)
- Post-communist states with neo-liberal democracies (Czech Republic, East and Central Europe)
- Neoliberal democracies (USA, Mexico)
- Neoliberal democracies with secessionist struggles (Mexico)
- Post-dictatorship states with neo-liberal democracies (Argentina)
- Post-revolution theocratic states (Iran)
- Occupied states with struggles for political autonomy (Palestine)

The fact that women's movements – and some with very strong feminist ideologies – have arisen in these widely differing contexts suggests that our theories about "enabling" and "disabling" conditions for movement building need to be reconsidered. For instance, the movements in Palestine, Iran, Argentina, and Mexico were built amidst the most disabling conditions imaginable: the occupation by Israel and daily violence and conflict; repression by the theocratic Iranian regime, profoundly suspicious of and hostile to even the most basic of women's rights; the chaos following the economic meltdown in Argentina; and an armed secessionist struggle violently and militarily suppressed by successive Mexican governments blind to the cultural hegemony and racism of its policies towards indigenous people. Clearly, strong women's movements are not only possible, but could even be a response to hostile conditions that affect not only women themselves, but their families and communities.

Another widely-held belief challenged by these movement stories is the necessity of liberal democracy, or rather, a "democratic space," for popular organizing. Indeed, the Czech and Iranian cases show that women have found ingenious and subversive ways of mobilizing even when that space is limited or absent. Since the 1979 Islamic revolution, Iranian women have not had a legitimate, legally ensured democratic space to organize or protest against the inexorable rolling back of their rights. Therefore,

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they formed a highly decentralized, "headless" movement that works both under and above ground. Women meet in private homes or under the guise of "religious meetings"; the cells of organized women are widely dispersed in both rural and urban areas across the country; and the movement is not led by one particular set of high-profile leaders whose detention can weaken the movement. All of this makes it virtually impossible for the regime to successfully repress or destroy this resilient struggle.

The Czech women began their organizing as mothers of young children at a time when public meetings of even five people were against the law; and even after the "Velvet revolution", the post-Soviet Czech state viewed their activities with suspicion, since the whole idea of civil society and popular organizing were still viewed as threats. They were also victims of the pro-natalist policies of both the Soviet and post-Soviet Czech state, which glorified motherhood to fight declining birth rates. They rewarded mothers of young children for doing the isolating work of full-time home-based childcare, and penalized them for wanting to be fully engaged citizens organized to intervene in urban planning and local and national policy as a collective force. It has taken over a decade of organized resistance and advocacy, and the subversive power of international recognition for the movement's leadership, to break through these barriers. The hangovers of the Soviet bloc's suspicion of civil society organizing still persist in many forms.

The post-colonial democratic contexts of India and Kenya, though, did not require this kind of subterranean organizing. Both countries had enabling legal and constitutional frameworks for the formation of NGOs and popular movements, but these movements faced other forms of resistance: debilitating levels of poverty combined with economic policies that made the opportunity cost of participation in movements quite high; persistent and exclusionary social power structures such as rigid patriarchy and caste (in the case of the Dalit women in India), and both male and upper-class attitudes that oppressed women (such as male-privileging sexual relations leading to high levels of HIV/AIDS infection among women in Kenya), and excluded their priorities and voices from policy processes (which is what GROOTS Kenya has worked to reverse). In the case of Kenya, long periods of authoritarian single-party rule created quasi-dictatorships that negated its democratic constitution. The progressive legislation on the books in India was equally unable to break the customary feudal power structures that continued to dominate historically oppressed castes, particular in rural areas.

The post-Apartheid neo-liberal democracy of South Africa is a unique case. At the birth of the "New South Africa" there was worldwide celebration of the far-reaching gender equality reforms initiated by the new regime – quotas for women in parliament, gender budgets, an empowered women's commission with veto powers over all public policy, etc. But these early promises have been betrayed at many levels. Neo-liberal economics has impoverished the vast majority of people, basic services and subsidies have been drastically reduced, HIV/AIDS has devastated the society and the economy, and sexual violence against women and girls, particularly, has grown unchecked. The One-in-Nine campaign (OINC) was triggered by the rape charge against a leading South African politician from the ruling party, but consolidated around the apathy of the government machinery in handling violence against lesbian and other women. The vast majority of the founders of this movement are poor black women facing the multiple disadvantages of poverty, gender, sexual orientation and violence in an increasingly threatening social environment.

The Palestinian women's situation is even more complex: while they enjoyed a large degree of civic space under the first Intifada and the Palestinian Authority, as citizens of an occupied territory, they have worked under almost continuous conditions of conflict and economic strife. Their movement has suffered from the NGO-ization that the liberal Palestinian Authority facilitated. The NGO-ization is also the unwitting result of the socio-economic conditions of women and children, on the one hand, and the loss of the progressive feminist movement's mass base to the Islamist agenda on the other. So women's organizations deliver services and engage in more western modes of rights advocacy, disconnected from any political mass movement. This benefits the Islamist forces, who take large numbers of women away from this imported feminist agenda with their more popular and militant stand against negotiations with Israel and its occupation of their territory. After the failure of the Palestinian Authority, and the launch of

the Second Intifada, the Islamists have created a space for women's political participation that the NGO-ized progressive feminist movement has failed to provide. The large numbers of grassroots women who have fled to support the Islamists are not yet aware of their instrumentalization by an agenda that will ultimately erode their rights and equality (something Iranian women know only too well).

Overarching Insights

Our ten case studies generate some broad and highly significant insights about the power and character of women's movements, worth noting before we get into the details of movements and organizations, structures, strategies, and achievements:

1. These movements were launched by women not essentially around their identity as women, but as women of *particular identities, categories and circumstances* – e.g., women of particular ethnicities / social groups (Roma women, Dalit women, indigenous women); women facing particular forms of exclusion or voicelessness (mothers, poor grassroots women), in particular occupations or economic situations (domestic workers, Piqueteras). In the words of Esther, a Zapatista woman,

   "I'm indigenous and I'm a woman, and that's all that matters right now."[2]

2. Our case histories demonstrate that the power of movements – and particularly of women's movements – lies in the fact that their constituents / members have become **primary agents of change**. I want to contrast this with the notion of **"agency"** which is popular in our rhetoric, because while even an effective feminist NGO will enable women to use their agency, they may not, consciously or unconsciously, actively move women of their constituency into primary leadership. The leadership that is built at the base is often secondary to the leadership of the NGO or support organization. But many of our cases – the domestic workers, Piqueteras, indigenous women, violence survivors in South Africa, the grassroots women of Kenya, and the Czech mothers - are replete with examples of primary agency, symbolized best, perhaps, by these words from a Piquetera leader:

   "In other times I would never have dreamed of being so far from home and fighting for demands that I believe are just…. Trying to tell people about the struggle of my factory and my people, well...these things...I'd never have seen myself doing this. I'm sure I always had the ability hidden away and that it was part of me, but I had never developed it".

3. Some movements are more "explicitly" feminist than others, and this is something worth unpacking. Why do some movements openly adopt the ideology and label of feminism, while others hesitate to do so, even when they are mobilizing isolated, marginalized or excluded women to gain visibility, voice, power, influence? GROOTS Kenya, Domestic Workers, and Czech mothers are either hesitant to call themselves feminist or have possibly felt distanced by experiences like those of the German Mothers Centres who couldn't find space or acknowledgement within the feminist movement for their issues and organizing[3]. This forces us to question how feminism has become positioned in a way (and not always by feminists themselves) that is exclusionary to women with an implicitly feminist agenda, or needs to engage them to advance – and possibly radicalize – their

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2. Note that all quotes in this document, unless otherwise noted, are drawn from the respective case study, available on-line at http://www.awid.org/eng/About-AWID/AWID-Initiatives/Building-Feminist-Movements-and-Organizations.
3. Personal communication of Monika Jaekel, one of the founders of the German Mothers Centres, in an interview conducted by the author in 2003.

agenda. The Czech Mothers, for instance, don't appear to have as yet challenged the gendered nature of child care responsibilities, but may do so without disclaiming or surrendering their role and rights as mothers. They have, so far, considered the needs of heteronormative families in their "family friendly" cities campaigns, but might move, gradually, to include other types of families. So they might be willing to adapt their agenda if they don't start out feeling that feminists would somehow reject them, making them defensive about their focus on the very gendered work of women, and one for which feminism in an earlier phase demanded recognition, respect, and economic value.

4. In several ways, our movements are reclaiming and reframing feminism – sometimes from urban middle class feminist issues, sometimes from the western model of individual liberation, and sometimes from the instrumentalist approaches of men's movements. Indigenous women have created, for instance, an analysis that asserts their unique culture and the power of their relationships with land and natural resources, while simultaneously challenging not only their culturally-rooted oppression but the dominance of mainstream culture and government policies. Roma women are struggling to do the same. Domestic workers are creating new links between their status as immigrants and a critical but exploited workforce with their status as marginalized women in need of accessible health and reproductive services. The One in Nine campaign is seeking to establish a new conceptual frame that locates sexuality at the core of women's struggles for justice and freedom from violence.

5. What is emerging, therefore, is a far more complex feminist analysis and theory that is not only articulating the intersecting nature of women's practical needs and strategic interests in a powerful way, but acting on this in incredibly insightful ways. The refusal of indigenous women, for instance, to step outside the larger movement for indigenous rights, while consistently challenging patriarchal reconstructions by male leaders of supposedly "traditional" gender relations; or the way domestic workers have reached out to a range of unlikely partners in their local mobilizations, are examples of this complex praxis.

6. Some movements are therefore very strategic about how and when to claim an autonomous identity – e.g. indigenous women and Piqueteras – and when to ally or embed their agendas within other movements. This is a particular kind of political strategy, which recognizes that the political agenda of the larger movement is critical to their own rights, and which seeks to avoid splintering movements in a way that could be exploited by the regimes and power structures they are challenging – we could easily imagine, for instance, how the Mexican government could seek to concede to the demands of the indigenous women's movement, but not of the indigenous movement at large. So, as the Indigenous Women's National Coordinating Committee recognizes,

"We women say that autonomy for indigenous peoples is the path towards initiating a new relationship among ourselves, to the Mexican government, to other Mexican people, and between men and women…"

7. Although many feminists tend to be critical of them, some of our movements have used mainstream development interventions and services - such as self-help groups, home-based care, or managing subsidies – as the base for movement building, and appear to be successfully going beyond the usual limits of these activities to create political consciousness and a longer-term political agenda. The self help member groups of GROOTS Kenya, for instance, have emerged as key challengers to local power structures, claiming inheritance rights for widows and orphans from customary tribunals, running for local elections, and ensuring local governance is responsive to their priorities and agenda. The Czech Mothers have earned a similar place of authority vis-à-vis town planning and urban development processes.

8. There is a very strong emphasis, in several of our movements, on building leadership, and especially on *new* (not necessarily "young") leadership. The domestic workers have taken this to the most sophisticated level by building leadership training into their governance model, and ensuring the development of "new" leaders. But leadership building to strengthen and sustain their move-

ments is a key concern and practice in several others – indigenous and Dalit women, Piqueteras, grassroots women, members of the OINC, etc.

9. The role of struggle as the best school for leadership and political consciousness is firmly attested by several of our movements – an achievement that cannot be claimed by the training programs offered by even the best feminist NGOs. The clarity, courage, and strategic insight of the indigenous women, of the Piqueteras, of the domestic workers, or of the Dalit women, would be hard to equal!

10. Our case studies also teach us that we must define the "radical" nature of political agendas and activism within the socio-political context in which movements have evolved, and not against some absolute ideological standard. The framing of issues by the Czech Mothers, for instance, could appear rather conventional (viz., centred around the isolation of nuclear-family motherhood and child-rearing) if we fail to recognize that their organizing began in the Soviet era. This was a time when public gatherings and civic action were dangerous, and the women who founded the movement were forced to meet on street corners to discuss their concerns – they were thus acting very radically. Their mobilization of other women and the resources to start mothers centres, in a region where neither men nor women had the privilege of acting independently in their own interest, was not only radical but a shrewd use of the space that the "Velvet Revolution" opened up. Similarly, the attempts of even older, more traditional Roma women in the IRWN, to make visible the concerns and interests of Roma women and children, must be recognized as radical given the male-dominated and essentially patriarchal agendas of other Roma organizations up to that time.

11. The framing of political agendas by these movements is also a fascinating process. In some movements, the evolution is from one or two gendered interests / issues (home-based care for the ill, collective spaces for mothers, recognition of domestic work as labour, removal of caste-based discrimination) to a more complex and intersectional analysis. As Klara Rulikova, a leader of the Czech Mothers Centres puts it,

"…With the mothers centre, we did not think about how we were trying to change society, it was simply about being together with others like myself."

In other cases, the agenda quickly assumes complexity and sophisticated analysis (OINC, IW), even if collective action is focused on particular struggles. The Roma case, however, demonstrates the contestation between older and younger activists, and different Roma women's formations (IRWN and JRWI) over the framing of the agenda, and intense but respectful negotiations between the two to create a more feminist agenda. Overall, the movements also demonstrate, much more so than male-dominated movements, a concern for building broader, more inclusive agendas that integrate the interests of a wider range of communities.

Factors Inhibiting or Constraining Movements

Among the factors that have hindered the formation and development of movements, the following are the most significant.

1. NGO-ization and a narrow issue or service focus without broader political understanding or analysis. The Roma, Palestinian and Domestic Workers cases all highlight the de-politicization that can happen as a result of an NGO-based agenda, which becomes more pre-occupied with the delivery of services, organizational survival concerns that are disconnected from movement-building, and an increasingly top-down approach. As the Domestic Workers case study points out,

"non-profit organizations ….. resisted a deep analysis of the political economic system that they were fighting to change, organizing groups were narrowly focused on issue-specific campaigns, rarely making connections with one another across communities and issue areas."

2. Movements built from above, with little or no organized base – something that some parts of the Roma women's movement (JRWI) have attempted to correct. This is a classic case of when a group of organizations form a coalition and assert themselves as a movement (IRWN), but without the mobilization of the grassroots women they claim to represent, and the lack of focus on political consciousness and empowerment on the ground.

3. Donor policies and approaches have also disabled some aspects of movement-building and strengthening activities: for instance, the National Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Women in Mexico has faced obstacles in resourcing its members' demands for training in political participation because donors won't fund these unless they have a hand in designing and running the courses. This is another way in which powerful external institutions can obstruct or derail movement agendas.

4. In the case of the Piqueteras, although the case study cites co-optation and repression as the primary reasons for the break up of their movement, one wonders whether it was also partly because they aligned themselves too strongly with political parties, which instrumentalized them and lost interest in their issues once the parties were able to change the regime, and gained access to formal political power. From being a strong, mass-based movement, the Piqueteras became clients of trade unions and their patron political parties, and were reduced to handling the state unemployment subsidies.

FIG.1: How they Began

Born out of	Movements	Catalyst / catalytic spaces
Movement building by feminist / women's organizations'	Dalit Mahila Samitit Kenyan grassroots women	Vanangana GROOTS Kenya
Specific political moments	Indigenous Women Piqueteras	Dialogue between Zapatistas and federal govt. of Mexico, resulting in the San Andrés Accords (1996); Waning of the *piquetero* movement
Strategic spaces (international or other meetings or conferences)	Groots Kenya Domestic Workers	Beijing US Social Forum
Crises	One In Nine Campaign Piqueteras	Zuma trial Killing of lesbian activists Economic collapse in Argentina Low morale of male activists
Other movements or local movements coalescing	Indigenous women Domestic workers	Zapatista movement Mexican Indigenous People's movement Local domestic worker unions / associations
Programs / interventions that morph into movements	Czech Mothers GROOTS Kenya	Setting up of mothers centres Home-based care for HIV/AIDS patients

Origin Stories – How they Began

The birth stories of the movements in our cases seems to fall into several overlapping categories, which are presented in Fig. 1; they also exhibit certain interesting evolutionary characteristics:

1. The growth of these movements is quite dramatic in some cases, in both scope and scale. As the Czech Mothers case study says, for example,

   "In the last fifteen years, these women have gone from creating one mother centre in Prague; to organizing and managing over 250 mother centres … to federating a country-wide network of women who work collectively on a broader set of values and goals that demonstrate why and how Czech society must become 'family friendly'."

2. The case studies show that movements have a distinct evolutionary path, and can be placed along a continuum of growth and maturity, which includes decay and decline. Some of our movements are in the making, some are emerging into full-blown movement form, and some are mature movements. And at least one, the Piqueteras, has declined and decayed. These stages are visible in terms of the number of movement characteristics exhibited by them:

   - Some movements are more "mature" than others – i.e., have a more conscious and well-articulated ideology and/or political agenda, an organized mass base, organizational and decision-making structure, processes for building and renewing leadership, and have clearly delineated relationships (in terms of strategic and other decision-making) with allies and support NGOs that work with them. They have developed sophisticated strategies, alliances and relationships, and growing recognition from governments, other movements, and the public.

   - Some are emerging movements - they have achieved a higher level of mobilization and collective power, an increasingly clear political agenda, and autonomous leadership structures, but are yet to achieve sustainability, political or policy impact, or changes in public perceptions of their issues or in the larger discourse.

   - Others are at a more nascent stage of movement formation, and need continued support to sharpen their politics, agenda, and strategies.

3. These movement "stages" suggest a "maturity" continuum that is presented in Fig. 2. The use of this term is not to suggest that earlier stages of movement formation constitute "immaturity". Rather, this is intended to help movement-building organizations and movements themselves see a useful trajectory along which to place themselves, and to locate next steps in their movement-building to move further along the continuum and achieve greater political impact.

Fig.2: Continuum of Movement Development and Maturity

Mobilization, awareness and identity building

Political consciousness and issue/s identification

Preliminary political agenda

Tentative actions for change

Nascent constituency-based leadership

Higher dependence on support organization

Movements in the making

Steady and sustained membership base

Higher political consciousness and evolving Organizational structure

Longer-term political agenda and change strategies

Internal leadership and decision-making structures and systems

Relationships with growing range of allies

Greater autonomy vis-à-vis support organization/s

Increasing visible impacts on society, discourses, policy, law, community etc., including backlashes

and setbacks

Emerging Movements

Strong and sustained membership base consciously identifying with the movement

Strong autonomous organizational and governance

Structure

Extensive and deep leadership

Sophisticated analysis, strategies, political acumen

High measurable impact on state and non-state actors, community, larger society

Strategic alliances and adversaries

Mature Movements

Relationships between Organizations and Movements

This is very complex terrain, and the case studies present a bewildering range of relationships that almost defy categorization. Nevertheless, at least four clear types of organizations were visible, and play distinctly different roles:

1. **Movement created organizations** (MCOs) – i.e., organizations set up *by movements* to govern themselves and strengthen accountability to their constituency / members, promote visibility, democratize representation, voice, and decision-making, manage services, and negotiate movement members' interests and priorities with other actors - some examples of MCOs can be found in the Piqueteras, NCC, DMS, CM, and DW case studies;

2. **Movement-building or supporting organizations** (MBOs) which stand in relationship to the movement, whose raison d'etre is to build and strengthen the movements they are allied to, and

may even be taking direction from it, but are not *created* by the movement itself; some examples of this relationship are the MBOs Vanangana and GROOTS Kenya, who exist to build and support the Dalit and poor Kenyan grassroots women's movements respectively;

3. **Organizations merging to form movements** – IRWN, JRWI, OINC are all examples of this. Their relationships with grassroots constituencies varies widely, however – while the organizations that formed the One-In-Nine Campaign clearly have extensive grassroots presence among poor women and communities, IRWN and JRWI are in the process of reaching out to the mass of poor Roma women across the East European countries where they are present.

4. **Organizational allies of movements** – including political parties (e.g., the left parties who supported and then co-opted the Piquetero/as), feminist academics / research groups and feminist organizations of various kinds (e.g., several of this category allied with the indigenous women's movement in Mexico and with the Domestic Workers in the US and provided strategic and capacity-building support), and even UN agencies or other donors (such as UNIFEM in the case of IW; UNHABITAT with the Czech Mothers; and even the Nobel Committee's awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Shirin Ebadi, boosting the Iranian women's struggle).

5. The quality of the **relationship dynamics** in each of these configurations can be unpacked and explored for deepening our understanding of how organizations and movements work together. In our ten case studies, several patterns or directionalities were evident:

   ■ **Equilateral / circular / symbiotic** – in this dynamic, neither the movement-building organization nor the movement has greater overall control or power, but the two exist in a circular, symbiotic relationship with each other, with one or the other taking the lead on action or decision-making in different contexts (the Vanangana-DMS relationship, for example);

   ■ **Paternalistic / instrumentalist / clientelist** – here, the allies, supporters or movement-building organizations are in command, with the movement leadership and its organizations being in a dependent or instrumental relationship with the former (the IRWN or JRWI, or the relationship of political parties to the Piqueteras, or the Palestinian women's NGOs, for instance);

   ■ **A continuum of formal to informal**, where elected governing-structure organizations (such as those created by the Czech Mothers, Indigenous Women, and the Domestic Workers) are at the formal end, and relationships built on common understanding or shared agendas, but with few governance, financial or other controls are at the informal end (as in the cases of the Iranian women or Dalit women);

   ■ The strength of **the "glue" that binds the relationship** is another variable in the range of relationships we see in the case studies. The Domestic Workers Alliance, for instance, is a looser coalition than the National Coordinating Committee of the indigenous women, the Czech Mothers national council, or the One in Nine Campaign's coalition; the Piqueteras, at the height of their movement, and the Iranian women, are very loosely federated networks of neighbourhood groups, but they are more tightly bound by ideology and cause than by organizational structure. Clearly, the "glue" factor overrides the superficial structures visible in these movements.

Strategies

The range of strategies used by these movements presents a dazzling array, some incredibly innovative, others politically astute, and still others deceptively conventional on the surface but working towards more radical ends. We shall unpack the strategic dimensions of our case studies by examining their targets and variety of interventions.

1. Institutions and forces that were engaged, resisted or challenged included:

   ■ **Formal, institutional actors** at local, national and international levels, viz., the state and its various arms (national and provincial governments, urban municipal councils, etc.), the UN and its various units and commissions (UNIFEM, CSW, CSD, etc.), and other international bodies.

- **International "norm structures" and instruments** such as human rights codes, urban habitat norms, international labour standards, environmental agreements, etc. (IW, DW, GK, RW).

- **National, transnational and global policy processes** – labour standards, sustainable cities discourses, indigenous people's rights, HIV/AIDS and micro-credit policies, human rights enforcement standards, and peace negotiations in conflict- ridden or occupied territories (DW, CM, IW, GK, RW, PW)

- **Market forces and the neo-liberal agenda** – the economic chaos caused by adherence to neo-liberal economic reforms, the growing "informalization" of work, and the dislocation or withdrawal of state-supported services under neo-liberal reforms (Piqueterass, DW, CM)

- **Feudal and semi-feudal patriarchal social structures and culture** – racism and patriarchy, caste discrimination, ethnic discrimination, violence against women (RW, IW, GK, OINC)

- **Customary and formal legal systems** – land rights for HIV/AIDS widows, rights of lesbian women, and legislation to regulate informal work such as domestic labour (DW, GK, OINC)

- **Civil society and other social movements**, including feminist and women's movements – to gain greater visibility and voice in some such as the labour movement, to transform male-dominated movements, to take over movements abandoned by men, and to radicalize movements with a more conventional liberal agenda (DW, IW, Piqueterass, OINC, RW)

- **Religious institutions and leaders –** the Iranian women's movement has been forced to engage with the national Muslim clergy as well as local imams, to challenge their interpretation of Islamic law, and demonstrate that the denial of rights over their children after divorce or widowhood, or loss of citizenship rights if they marry non-Iranian men, have no basis in or sanction from the Quran or Shari'a.

2. All the movements used **multi-faceted strategies** reflecting the complex way they framed their issues and their theories of change. None depended on some single "magic bullet" approach, even if they had begun that way. This is an important lesson for those who believe that a single intervention - such as credit or income-generation - can grow automatically into a "movement," or create broader transformative changes in women's lives. This is the background against which we must view the inter-linking strategies used by our movements, which fall into the following broad categories (though this is by no means a comprehensive list):

- **Mobilizing and organizing** a large mass-base of affected women – and in some instances, men affected by the same forces (though in a support role). This is a work in progress for some of our movements – such as the Roma women – while for others, it is an advanced process (DW, IW, GK, CM, OINC, PW, Iranian women).

- **Collecting data and information** (especially through participatory research methods) to mobilize and politicize their own constituents, to engage policy makers in an informed way, and to challenge dominant or mainstream interpretations of their issues (CM, DMS, DW, IW, OINC).

- **Forming international linkages** or membership of international networks to raise their profile and visibility, gain political leverage, access policy spaces, or protect themselves (IW, PW, CM, GK, Iranian women)

- **Building relationships and alliances** to strengthen their power, expand their influence and visibility, or gain access to new spaces and processes (DW, DMS, IW, OINC, PW)

- **Training and capacity-building** – especially in areas like leadership development and political participation – to strengthen their own movements and organizations, but also to make greater impact on the institutions they engage or enter (CM, DMS, DW, GK, IW)

- **Developing and refining their political analysis and agenda** – all the movements in our case studies demonstrated the evolution of their thinking about the social, political, economic

and cultural basis of their subordination, and built political agendas that grew in sophistication along with their analysis.

- **Strengthening their own organizations and structures** (including through training and capacity building), to create more democratic, accountable, representative and credible processes for themselves and in the eyes of those they engage (all)

- **Mobilizing resources** for their movements and movement-building in various ways (Solidarity Fund for Kosovar Roma Refugees, Home-based care provision, self-supported Mothers Centres, pooling savings by Dalit women, IW's resourcing of their work, etc.)

- **"Educating" local officials and government representatives** to grasp their approaches and support rather than obstruct (CM, GK), or sensitizing and educating other social movement leaders or allies (DMS, DW, OINC, IW)

- **Political participation** of various kinds, including election to local governance structures, scrutiny of functioning of local bodies and development programs, implementation of labour laws, etc. (CM, DMS, DW, GK, IW)

- **Legal reform work / advocacy** including reform of religious laws and codes (DW, CM, IW, Iranian women, RW)

- **Armed resistance** (Piqueteras, IW) or **non-violent resistance** demonstrations, marches, etc. (Iranian women)

- **Seizing spaces, mechanisms or control** usually exercised by other, more powerful actors, e.g. taking over factories abandoned by the "bosses" and running it themselves (Piqueteras), seizing the right to recognize and reward from the state into their own hands (CM instituting a "Family Friendly Prize" for city officials), using religious gatherings and meetings to raise women's rights issues (Iranian women), challenging the exclusion of grassroots women in global policy processes (GK).

Governance and Decision-making Structures

1. The case studies show that women have used, adapted and transformed structural forms that have evolved in the civil society and social movement terrain over centuries – mass assemblies, unions, federations, networks, and coalitions. Registered legal entities – nonprofits or NGOs are also a part of the spectrum, both created by movements as governance or representational structures, as well as those that exist precisely to build, support, and serve movements. The studies depict four broad categories of structural forms assumed by these movements:

   - **Coalitions / Networks of Organizations** – such as OINC, or IRWN and JWRI, which comprise organizations connected around a particular political agenda and acting together on that agenda.

   - **Federations** – such as the IW's NCC, or the Czech Mothers, or the Domestic Workers unions, or the Piqueteras organizations, which comprise a tighter formation of units of affected women coming together to frame and pursue their political agenda

   - **NGO-federation partnerships** – such as the Dalit women and Vanangana, or GROOTS Kenya the NGO and its women's groups in Nairobi and other provinces

   - **Underground networks** – this is the unique form of the Iranian women's movement, which has to use word-of-mouth and other informal means of communication to make strategic and other decisions.

2. Depending on the age, stage, and geographic spread of the movement, the structures evolved for planning, strategizing, and governance have an equivalent number of layers. The **older and more**

mature movements – indigenous women, domestic workers, Czech mothers, etc. – **have more complex structures** than the younger and emerging movements. But it is not clear whether we can conclude that the degrees of formality of the structures created for decision-making and governance are related more to the type and political agenda of the movement than to its age or spread.

For instance, the Piqueteras used the informal but very powerful format of popular assemblies and *"fogados"* reminiscent of the French Revolution, One in Nine functioned by convening as many member organization representatives as possible for taking decisions on the run, while the Dalit Women use "cluster committees", and a major constituent union of the Domestic Workers (viz., the MUA) use the *"Comite Corazon"* – the campaign coordinating "heart" committee. The challenges of creating appropriate structures are summarized by Dawn Cavanagh, one of the leaders of the One in Nine Campaign:

"We were running on pure energy, and it was very untidy, it was messy at first; those who were willing and able to do the work, they were the ones doing it, and decisions got made by whoever was able to just be there, and everyone accepted that, it wasn't until later that we got to sit down and design proper terms of reference and map out a more longterm strategy, we weren't responding to a preplanned anything, with a budget, and so on, we were just building as powerfully as we could, it was a totally new way of organizing for us"

3. The systems of governance created by these movements – and particularly the more advanced ones - therefore suggest a **need for us to interrogate notions of "formal" and "informal" structures** in movement-building. Clearly, some of the most informal seeming structures – the Piqueteras assemblies, GROOTS Kenya's annual retreats, and OINCs day-to-day consultations – were very powerful and in some ways, highly organized and participatory. But then, so also are the structures of the Indigenous Women's National Coordinating Committee, the Dalit Mahila Samiti, and the Czech Mothers. Some – such as OINC have seen a need to move from more informal styles of decision-making in its early stages to a more systematic and democratic approach in order to ensure that it adheres to the feminist values and principles they have consciously adopted for their struggle.

4. Regardless of the form the structures take, though, a remarkable feature of the movements is that they have all struggled – apparently successfully - to create deeply **democratic, representative and layered governance and decision-making structures**. The structures reflect the operation of certain core principles that are clearly feminist, whether the movement calls itself feminist or not., viz.:

   ■ **Ensuring voice and representation** for all their members / constituents, especially at the grassroots;

   ■ **Nominating or electing leaders / representatives from each level of their constituents** who form the base, or foundation, of the movement.

   ■ **Forming accessible, participatory units or layers of decision-making** as the movement spreads geographically or grows numerically – "cluster committees", local unions, county- or province-level units, local mother's centre board.

   ■ Many of **the structures have ensured accountability to the movement's base or membership**, displaying a concern for ensuring that the "apex" decision-making body or NGO is not too far away, too powerful or unaccountable, or too arbitrary. In other words, the process of agenda-setting and decision-making is itself bottom-up rather than top-down. As the GROOTS Kenya case study puts it,

"The regional groups consistently inform the strategic direction of the organization, and their involvement is multi-faceted. For instance, at the annual retreat, the representatives of the various regions determine the annual fund raising plan of the secretariat. In addition, through the regional focal point leaders, mentorship and direction is provided to the sub groups, so that there is regular consultation and inflow of information from

focal point leaders, to the secretariat and back to the various groups in the region. Even at donor meetings, the regional representatives at times negotiate grants on behalf of their regions, while at other times fundraising is done for Groots Kenya."

5. Another fascinating question is **how autonomous are the various constituent units of these movements**, and over what types of issues or actions do they exercise that autonomy? This is worth debating not only in relation to the NGO-movement relationships in our case studies, but even in the movement-created organizations and governance structures. Many of the constituent units of the movements obviously run their own programs and services at the grassroots level – such as livelihood programs, credit schemes, schools and child care services – relatively independent of the larger federation or umbrella organization of which they are a part (e.g., see the indigenous women, Palestinian women and Groots Kenya case studies). The network and coalition type structures – such as used by the Domestic Workers – also follow this approach, with local unions developing their own strategies and tactics. But while there is a high degree of autonomy in designing activities at the local level, most of the movements demonstrate that there is coherence and unity in acting on the collective political agenda. For instance, no section of the Indigenous Women's movement will go off to negotiate their own agreements with the Mexican government – this would only be done through their National Coordinating Committee, after reaching consensus throughout their layers.

6. **The leadership structures** are also largely drawn from the mass membership or grassroots constituents of the movement. Even campaigns like OINC, formed by a coalition of NGOs, have ensured that leadership is in the hands of the women who have directly experienced the forms of violence the campaign is addressing, rather than women from the privileged or dominant groups. Where multiple layers of leadership exist, several movements have developed very democratic processes of selection / election and representation (see the Dalit Mahila Samiti, the Domestic Workers, and Czech Mothers case studies for example). The systems of accountability of the leadership to the constituents are very strong in some and less clear in other cases.

7. Given the data present in the case studies, it is possible to conclude that **these movements "model" both the principles and practice of feminist decision-making and governance structures**.

Achievements and Influence

The case studies present an incredible range of achievements, and numerous spheres in which they have exercised influence on public attitudes, discourse about their issues, and on law, policy, and practice. The multiplicity of these impacts are well articulated in the indigenous women's journey:

"The new spaces for participation, the multiple dialogues established with various social actors, and a new approach to the rights of women and the rights of indigenous peoples, have necessarily upset gender roles.... All these organizational spaces—whether independent or governmental— may be conceived of as spaces for the production of meaning, a process that has led indigenous women, intentionally or unintentionally, to reflect on their condition, thereby producing an interchange between gender, ethnicity, and social class.[4]

".... [The] Discourse impacts on feminism and feminists: broadening the comprehension of how to relate gender identity to other identities, such as that of class and ethnicity; recognizing and understanding the resistance of many women to controversial themes in the feminist movement, such as sexuality; dismantling

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4. Proyecto Colectivo, "Viejos y Nuevos Espacios de Poder: Mujeres Indígenas, Organización Colectiva y Resistencia Cotidiana."

the view of indigenous women as a vulnerable group lacking the ability and power to bring about changes in their own condition; recognizing the need to create alliances with other social movements and to reflect on the role that men should have in the struggle for gender equity; and recovering numerous forms of struggle and resistance that are innovative for the feminist movement, above all with a view to the construction of a broader social base, capable of becoming a counterweight to de facto power."

The impact and influence of the movements closely mirrors the strategies they have pursued, but go beyond them as well:

1. **Organizing affected masses of women** to challenge, resist, and transform the socio-cultural, economic, and political processes that have exploited, marginalized, or violated their rights in different ways.

2. Building **an organized mass-base of women with growing levels of political consciousness,** consciousness of their own power and agency, and enabling them to become primary actors in the changes they are seeking to make.

3. **Advancing / reframing discourse** – such as what are feminist issues, what is feminism, what is violence, what are religiously sanctioned rights of women, etc.

4. **Enhanced space, voice, and visibility** – especially for groups who had little presence or influence before the movements began

5. **Changes in laws, policies, development paradigms** – reshaping labour laws and policies, challenging dominant interpretations of religious codes, ensuring family-friendly urban planning, self-help approaches to home-based care for the ill or child care, women controlling and managing unemployment subsidies, approaches to customary land and natural resource rights, etc.

6. **Accessing justice for women** – not only formally, through courts, but transforming public perceptions of the nature of violence against women, and the invisibility of some forms of violence – such as the stigmatization and legitimization of violence against lesbian women, Dalit women and girls, or the subtle forms of violence inherent in the deprivation of inheritance rights and rights over children for women widowed by AIDS or wars and conflict.

7. **New bodies of information and knowledge** – the surveys, data collected, and knowledge-building by some of these movements has challenged not only dominant / mainstream constructions, but even feminist understandings. Domestic work as labour, rethinking the role of family and traditional culture and practices, the high levels of militancy of the piqueteras and their ability to generate jobs and increase production in businesses abandoned by entrepreneurs, the creation of a new framework linking sexuality, violence and poverty, - list of knowledge increments and transformations is impressive.

8. **Claiming and gaining concrete new resources and assets for women** – including collective spaces like the mothers centres, inheritance rights and land and property for women widowed by AIDS, access to health and other services, livelihoods and incomes, etc.

9. **Creating new skills and capacities for women** – the range of leadership and other capacity and skill-building approaches of the movements has created an entirely new form of power and personal and collective capital for their members.

10. **Changes in customary practices and power relations** – the achievements of the Dalit, Roma, Kenyan and Indigenous Women are all examples of how culture has been reclaimed but also transformed in particular ways, and where real changes have occurred in resistant areas like caste-based or ethnic-based exclusion and discrimination.

11. **Challenges to and sensitization of other social movements** – this is a key achievement of several of the movements, which have not only transformed (with some resistance) the larger male-led movements of which they are a part, but also the movements with which they have allied themselves.

12. **Increased public awareness and sensitization** – many of the movements have, in the process of their mobilization and action strategies, gained a high profile, media attention, and implicitly, some degree of sensitization of public opinion to an alternative viewpoint of important issues like rape, sexual orientation, the power and agency (rather than victimhood) of poor or marginalized women.

What did we find that we didn't know?

While many of our case studies affirmed our beliefs about the transformative potential of women's movements, they also highlighted new dimensions and changes, including the following:

1. Although women's movements aspire to flat structures, rather than hierarchies, most of the organizational formats created by the movements under study are not really "flat" – but they are democratic and accountable. This means we need to question the notion that the ideal feminist structure is flat and without hierarchy of any kind. Our cases demonstrate that meaningful hierarchy, with careful attention to democratic representation and downward and upward accountability, are critical to the effectiveness of feminist movements. The structures of governance created by the Indigenous women, the Czech mothers, the Dalit Mahila Samiti, and the Domestic Workers Alliance are highly democratic, representative structures, elected by the mass of their members – but they do vest certain kinds of decision-making power within the leadership that is so elected.

2. A fascinating and related question, which needs to be explored further, is how accountable in reality are the structures that these movements have created to their members? Have there been cases where leaders have been removed, for instance, from office, or called to question for their actions? Can we claim, that is, that women's movement governance structures are more accountable than those of other movements?

3. Some movements – such as the One in Nine Campaign – have articulated an explicitly "feminist" vision of leadership and shared power, and tried to function through consensus-building approach to all major decisions. Others have developed feminist leadership and methodologies without specifically espousing the "feminist" label. This calls to question how we have applied the "feminist" identity. Our case studies show that it is principles, values, and commitment to empowering women that is feminist, rather than the formal declaration of that identity. It is unfortunate, however, that so many groups have been alienated from proudly claiming their inherent feminism, because, perhaps, of the way that ideology has been claimed and controlled by some gatekeepers. We must re-think what makes a movement feminist, and how to create boundaries that are inclusive rather than exclusive.

4. Although the literature on social movements speaks of movements *seizing* political moments, some of our movements have actually *created* political moments – One in Nine, for instance, did not simply seize the moment of Jacob Zuma's trial, but created its own when it launched protests around the murder of two lesbian activists, an event that would have otherwise sunk without sound. The Iranian women, similarly, have created their own political moments during their celebrations of International Women's Day, forcing the theocratic state and religious leaders to confront their challenges. All our case studies, in fact, are replete with such examples, meaning that powerful social movements trigger their own political turning points as much as they take advantage of opportunities opened by the political forces they are attempting to transform.

5. Finally, some of our case studies force us – and especially donors to reconsider the dismissal of global and national conferences as "talk shops" with little strategic value. We see amongst our cases movements that were either born or catalyzed by events such as the Beijing World Women's Conference (GROOTS), and the US Social Forum (Domestic Workers). In fact, the US Social Forum was given new life and power by the Domestic Workers Alliance, who targeted it as

a key organizing space and motivated other progressive groups and movements to revive their flagging interest in this event. This gives us new hope that events like the AWID Forum can be significant movement-creating or stimulating spaces, bringing new energy to old movements and dramatic vision and insight to new ones.

We hope this document, and the ideas it contains, will help inspire more of us to re-dedicate ourselves to building strong, vibrant feminist movements wherever we are located in the world!

Building
Feminist
Movements and
Organizations

awid women's rights

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