

GLOBAL PROGRAMME ADVISORY GROUP

RESEARCH PROGRAMME CONSORTIUM
PATHWAYS TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

DUNFORD HOUSE, UK
13 FEBRUARY 2008

MEETING REPORT

Compiled by Rebecca Napier-Moore

SUMMARY

This report covers the second meeting of the Global Programme Advisory Group (GPAG) of the Pathways to Women's Empowerment Research Programme Consortium (RPC), which is a five year programme funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). A group from civil society, academia and international development agencies, the GPAG's purpose is to help ensure academic quality of research and effectiveness of the Global Hub communications strategy.

This second GPAG meeting follows that held on 16-17 November 2006 where the advisory group reviewed initial research project proposals. Findings to date from these projects were presented to this second meeting. The afternoon session reviewed connections to other parts of the RPC, funding and budgeting, communications, and overall Global Hub strategy. Members saw communications as needing continued strategic action, in terms of actively engaging in new global spaces. In concluding reflection, members said they were pleased to see that the Global Hub had broadened its scope and that so much attention was being placed on the *process* components of the research, rather than a sole focus on publications. Output and strategy were agreed, as was a next meeting to be held after the upcoming January 2009 RPC mid-term review.

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IN ATTENDANCE:

Stephanie Barrientos, RPC researcher University of Manchester
Firdous Azim, RPC researcher BRAC University
Susie Jolly, RPC researcher IDS
Ellen Wratten, DFID
Helen O'Connell, One World Action, GPAG Convenor
Rosalind Eyben, Convenor of RPC global hub programme
Laura Turquet, Action Aid UK
Hussainatu Abdullah, RPC researcher Sierra Leone
Jeremy Holland, Oxford Policy Management
Rebecca Napier-Moore, IDS – Rapporteur

APOLOGIES:

Viviene Taylor, University of Cape Town & DAWN
Sarojini Thakur, Commonwealth Secretariat
Guro Katharina Vikor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
Sarah White, University of Bath
Rawwida Baksh, IDRC, Canada
Nazneen Kanji, Aga Khan Network Foundation
Maxine Molyneux, Institute for the Study of the Americas, UK
Sarah Mosedale, University of Manchester
Patti O'Neill, DAC Gendernet, OECD
Hoda Rashad, American University in Cairo
Everjoice Win, Action Aid International
Joanne Sandler, UNIFEM
Zohra Khan, One World Action
Jo Morris, TUC
Andrea Cornwall, IDS (convening parallel-session Consortium Advisory Group)

INTRODUCTIONS AND THE GLOBAL HUB CONCEPT

This second Global Programme Advisory Group (GPAG) meeting was convened by Helen O'Connell, who welcomed members present and reminded all of the last meeting in November 2006 which took place towards the end of the RPC's inception phase. At that meeting members reviewed and advised on the design of the initial set of global hub research projects that had been identified following a scoping workshop in May 2006.

Rosalind Eyben reminded the meeting of the remit and work of the global hub within the wider context of the RPC and referred participants to the RPC website for more details www.pathwaysofempowerment.org.

The meeting proceeded to presentations on progress of the four research projects that started in 2007.

CHANGING MARKETS CHANGING LIVES: OPENING GLOBAL SPACES FOR RIGHTS OF WOMEN WORKERS

Stephanie Barrientos

As part of the Empowering Work theme of the RPC, this research project looks at women's voices in those spaces which are shaping the global economy and workers' rights. (See powerpoint presentation.) It examines "how women's concerns have been given voice in global commercial processes." There can be a lot of empowerment associated with global production networks, as women have the potential to have control over resources, as well as equal access to good jobs, rights and protection. However, corporate buyers care about women as consumers, as profit is at the consumer end, not as producers and are squeezing costs at the producer level. In global production networks there is an asymmetry of power between casualized workers, fragmented suppliers, agents and buyers. While liberalisation is dominant at the level of workers and suppliers, there is immense concentration at the buyer end.

"The research draws on two comparative case studies: (i) an examination of woman fruit workers in South Africa, and the role of a women's NGO *Women on Farms* in challenging Tesco to ensure an improvement in the working conditions for women farm workers within their value chain; and (ii) GAP Inc's engagement with *Women Working Worldwide*, a small women's NGO which campaigned against GAP, but was subsequently invited to undertake a gender analysis in its global product chain."

Strategies need to look at new leverage points and alliances. The research follows actors with differing bargaining models – one of cooperation and the other of conflict

Comments on research content:

- ◆ There is a trend of de-unionization within the formal sector. Stephanie responded saying that, while this is essential and important, the current project is looking above these problems, examining the role of activity in global spaces and how can that empower workers to act.
- ◆ Tensions exist. The first is about encouragement of people to boycott companies, as this results in companies losing money and workers losing in the end. Further, higher prices should not be a result of campaigning because poorer consumers lose. Noted that it was possible to pay higher wages without increasing prices.

EXPLORING POSITIVE APPROACHES TO SEXUALITY

SUSIE JOLLY

In the Changing Narratives of Sexuality theme, this project proposed to do case study research in one or more locations on how local, national or regional initiatives on sexual rights and women's empowerment interact with international influences such as conservative religious revivals, international sexual rights mobilisation and the global development industry. Yet, Susie explained

that due to her upcoming maternity leave and recent DFID funding for a Sexuality and Development Programme at IDS, she has shifted the project to look on interactions between sexual rights activists in Beijing and international donors who fund them. She has expanded the original concept for a workshop on this theme to be a joint RPC-IDS sexuality programme event entitled 'Sexuality and the Development Industry' which will be held from 3-5 April 2008. (See powerpoint presentation.)

Research has involved semi-structured interviews with 15 activists, donors and government officials in Beijing in January 2008. Donor funding in China is small, but is instrumental in aiding the women's movement. Donors are enabling, but they are also channelling people in certain directions. Susie has looked at the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, originally set up after Ford Foundation suggested it. It has become an umbrella funder, reaching smaller organisations that do not work in English and that donors would not reach. The interviews have yet to be analysed.

At the workshop in April 2008 participants (academics, activists and donors) will look at development's connections to sexuality, looking for more creative and constructive means of engagement, including moving to more positive, empowering approaches to women's sexuality.

Comments on research content:

- ◆ Someone asked what interest donors have in funding sexual rights activists. Some donors have gender remits which they or civil society groups interpret as activism on sexuality. The Ford Foundation specifically has a remit on sexuality. Generally women's rights activists and sexuality activists are not linked up.
- ◆ Donor policy and programming can consider itself 'gender blind' (thinking it has no effect), but because donors have not taken account of power, exclusions or discriminations around women and sexuality, they reinforce status quo.
- ◆ Increased donor funding can cause problems: some donors 'projectise' movements, putting their logo on them, which undermines the movement, making it seen as having an outsider-driven agenda.

The project outputs will be an article for the International Journal of Human Rights and a Routledge book. There will also be a seminar/forum in Beijing in 2009 to feedback to interviewees, as well as to activists and donors more broadly.

FEMINISTS IN DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS

ROSALIND EYBEN

Feminists in International Development Organisations is a project which is part of the building constituencies for equality and justice theme of the RPC. It asks how feminist insiders in large bureaucratic organisations are working to make their organisations function as pathways of women's empowerment. Rosalind explained that she is facilitating 'femocrats' researching themselves in their organisational contexts, then reflecting on what they discover, and changing their practices based on those discoveries.

Rosalind had hoped that participant-researchers involved would talk to each other, communicating horizontally, but the reality is that their only communication is through her, and through organised events. She organised an evening workshop at the last Commission on the Status of Women session, where research participants revised the projects' research questions and developed a code of confidentiality. In addition to a lack of horizontal communication, formalised and recorded self-enquiry tended to take place only when Rosalind prompted. Therefore, Rosalind has developed a process of structured one-on-one, conversations with participants. Participants do not form a representative sample, but are people Rosalind knows – a research design necessary because the project depends on relations of trust. The interim research report circulated before the GPAG meeting was drafted for the participants, summing their experience to date.

Comments on research content:

- ◆ The project traces how people 'learn to play the game'. In learning to play the game, however, concern was raised about whether people then stop (or indeed never start) challenging the structure, which is the ultimate objective in transformation? Rosalind suggested that reflecting on practice might be one antidote.
- ◆ Rosalind said that 'the people in this project have decided to work inside bureaucracies because they think that the bureaucracy offers a pathway to change. They are not committed to the bureaucracy, but to the pathway.' There was discussion about whether feminists in the project saw a need to change their organisations first ('get their house in order') or to use their organisation to change things outside it. Rosalind noted that none of the participants were trying hard to do the former.

Comments on methodology:

- ◆ There was concern that there is only one southern woman (working in a northern office) in the project. Rosalind further worries about this as a 'head office' research project. It is difficult, however, to change the project to include more participants due to the face-to-face element needed for the conversations. Rosalind will try to attach this project to work as she visits regional hubs for another RPC project.
- ◆ This project could link to the RPC's Life Stories project.

CONCEPTS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN GLOBAL POLICY SPACES

ROSALIND EYBEN

This paper was presented in the conference before the GPAG meeting on 12 February, when much feedback was given to the paper. (*See forthcoming discussion paper*).

Comments on research content and methodology:

- ◆ The title phrase Global Policy Spaces implies other spaces, such as corporates or trade unions, which were not included in the paper. It was discussed if including those sectors in next research would be a way to take the project forward. However, there are problems in asking corporates about their conceptualization of women's empowerment. Further, those

spaces hold no or little text specifically on women's empowerment/gender equality to examine.

- ◆ Instead, deepening the present study could be undertaken through more emphasis on history and context.

Rosalind and Rebecca will publish a slightly amended version of the paper in its present state, and then take the work forward. One subsequent project is already being formed: a meeting of feminist economists to examine women's empowerment in the context of and in response to the World Bank's "Smart Economics" agenda. Diane Elson and Marzia Fontana are spearheading this with Rosalind. The meeting will be looking for alternatives, and looking to challenge hegemonic discourse that is crowding out other versions of economics. One participant suggested that, as there is an issue of the World Bank having co-opted women's empowerment language, we should hold them to it, analyzing tension points and applying pressure, rather than disengaging. The questions we are left with are these: Whom should we influence in the Bank, and whom outside the Bank? And, how long will women's empowerment be on the Bank's agenda now that climate change is taking over?

Conclusions were that the paper/project be deepened rather than broadened; that it should ask about historical influences; and that it should nuance and bring to light contradictory pressures.

REPORT ON THE FIRST IMPLEMENTATION YEAR OF THE GLOBAL HUB, FEBRUARY 2007-2008

ROSALIND EYBEN

Rosalind explained that there was a parallel meeting taking place that day reviewing the work of the entire RPC and that the activities of the global hub had to be understood within that wider context. A full narrative report of the RPC's work, including that of the global hub, would be available within the next month.

Working within the consortium

The report back on global hub researchers' participation in RPC events noted that all the global hub researchers participated in the research methods workshop in Cairo in February 2007, but were unable to go the two subsequent thematic workshops (one on building constituencies and a second on work), Stephanie, however, has been linked to the North Africa/Middle East hub with the Work theme, and she is engaged directly with them. There is going to be a workshop in late 2008/early 2009 to bring the Work themes' projects together, resulting in an edited book exploring synergies. Susie has been connected to RPC members in Bangladesh on the theme of sexuality, and Rosalind has newly published the RPC's first discussion paper in relation to the cross-cutting strand of work on policy. The RPC Management Group that met in the first week of February has proposed that Rosalind work with each of the hubs in relation to this strand of RPC work. She will try to visit all the regional hubs within the next year for this purpose.

Upcoming Mid-term Review

The RPC mid-term review is in January 2009. In preparation for that, during the second half of 2008, there will be several thematic write-shops, and a large conference. There is discussion about

whether this larger conference should be RPC only or for wider participation. The current plan is to invite those who are conducting the mid-term review to come to that event.

Possible future activities

1) The global hub is considering how best to contribute to 2009 30th anniversary of *CEDAW*. Two possibilities under active consideration are a qualitative study of the impact of *CEDAW* over the last thirty years as a pathway of empowerment in different national contexts and, secondly a forward-looking exercise in terms of a visioning event for future pathways. One participant suggested the visioning event be framed around the following question: What is the vision of a world made for women, vs. a world with women added on? This would not a strategy exercise, but imagining the end first and then looking at the pathways. However, subsequent discussion concluded that such an event would be too general. Someone said that the RPC should look at the strategic entry-points and opportunities around us, and have an event looking at where power lies. Rosalind will draft a concept note to give to the management committee and will also send it to GPAG for comments

2) There is little current work on *climate change* and gender. Bridge at IDS was recently commissioned to prepare a review. There are migration and adaptation dimensions to look at here, and in terms of global capacity the RPC is well placed to do this. The structure could mirror the 1325 project, with Global and country-specific research.

Funding Update

The relatively small financial envelope of the global hub constrains what we can do unless additional funding can be obtained. At the November 2006 meeting there were two projects on the table which linked the global with the regional hubs and for which we were seeking funding:

1) A project around United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and in relation to RPC research in Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Palestine and Sudan as well global hub research by the RPC partner, UNIFEM. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the government of Norway has now agreed to fund this project.

2) Looking at how women's groups in aid recipient countries mobilize resources around organising for women's rights, and the relevance and impact of external financing. A detailed project proposal was developed by the global hub in coordination with the South Asia and West Africa regional hubs and the Royal Tropical Institute, but so far we have failed to secure financing. Various avenues are currently being explored.

Communications

Global hub researchers reported back on the meetings they have been to, what efforts they have made to spread word about the RPC and the global hub's work, and what strategies they could/will follow in the upcoming months.

Stephanie Barrientos will link with Open Democracy in April, write a working paper in May and is planning the book (on the Empowering work theme) in 2009. She attended meetings of these groups: the WTO World Expert Development Forum, European Commission on Trade, Labour Behind the Label, the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference at the ILO, Women Working on

Farms, and Women Working Worldwide. Rosalind attended the Commission on the Status of Women session last March and organised a meeting on the status of the gender and development lobby in the UK with the GAD Network. She has contributed to Open Democracy and hopes to participate in the DAC Gendernet in June and DAVOS next January. Susie is planning a workshop on sexuality in about a year's time. The RPC will be represented at the AWID bi-annual conference in November. Involvement in the G8 was raised as a high-profile space obtaining media coverage to open up. It was suggested that the EU is missing in the Global Hub's scope. However, its inclusion is problematic in that it is regional and quickly becomes a very large project. The global hub could look at regional alliances, maybe not in the next two years, but possibly in the following two. Possible involvement in the Organisation of the Islamic conference was also raised. Furthermore, the need for the Global Hub to do things more in the UK domestic sphere was mentioned, possibly following John Gaventa's Champions of Participation model.

Next Meeting

The next meeting should be after the mid-term review. One possible date mentioned was September 2009.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

It was noted that the Global Hub had broadened scope with both the work done, as well as who we talk to and the events which we attend. Further, participants were pleased that a lot of consideration is being given to process of research and strategy, rather than a sole focus on delivering publications. Someone wondered about better fitting the global hub's work into DFID, and how DFID, and especially the Social Development Advisors, can use what comes out of the RPC. It was suggested that the group commit to being more proactive in including an RPC communications agenda in other work, including the need for each GPAG member to make better efforts to distribute information about the RPC.