Empowerment and Development Planning: A forced South Asian marriage?[1]

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Introduction

Originating in feminists circles concerned with alternative development models, empowerment is no longer used just by social movement activists seeking to reconfigure power relations and structures; it peppers the text of virtually every national and international policy and development document addressing women, the poor and (somewhat less frequently) other marginalized categories, whether it is a document of the UN, international financial institutions or national plans and policies. The term is even used by commercial enterprises. Popular worldwide usage attests to a seductive appeal of empowerment. It also seems vested with a chameleon-like quality that enables adaption to its user's environment. But does usage by highly divergent actors in dissimilar contexts refer to the same concept or to an altogether different creature? This paper examines what happens when a concept that originates in a critique of current power arrangements as well as development processes and calls for a bottom up approach is adopted by top-down development planning. Questioning the extent to which it is possible to harmonise empowerment as conceptualized by feminists with the concerns of development planning, it asks whether inserting empowerment into policy planning is not some ways a 'forced marriage' with attendant problems. Based on the conceptual framework developed by a multi-country research project on women's empowerment,[2] the paper first reviews some key conceptual elements of women's empowerment. It then considers three women's empowerment policy documents in South Asia (India, Pakistan and Afghanistan) and compares this with the pre-empowerment discourse of the Sri Lankan *Women's Charter* to gauge what value has been added by inserting (which concepts of) empowerment. Having investigated what policy documents understand by empowerment, it contrasts this with the experiences of women and actual development initiatives in South Asia. It concludes that while the marriage may be forced in many ways, it nevertheless has had positive impact for women's empowerment endeavours.

Concepts of empowerment

The concept of empowerment grew out of feminist analyses and debates within the women's movement in the 1980s, especially in the Third World (or global South in contemporary terminology). Debates drew upon and engaged with Paolo Freire's "conscientisation" approach

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that placed issues of power and the oppressed squarely at the centre of the discourse (Rowland 1995) but failed to address gender and patriarchy. Using a women's lens, feminists revisited and refashioned the call for upturning the prevalent top-down models through the catalytic, participatory and liberating agency of the oppressed poor. Other influences that shaped thinking and critique was a rediscovery of Antonio Gramsci's work on "subalterns" and the hegemonic role of dominant ideologies, the emergence of social construction theory and post-colonial theory. (Batliwala 2007, Gurumurthy and Baltiwala 2009) Crucially, empowerment was conceived as a process that entailed both a cognitive analysis of the existing power structures and systems that kept women disempowered and action to transform these. As elsewhere, South Asian feminists engaged policy makers to reorient development planning to be more responsive to women's empowerment needs. Advocates were successful– possibly beyond expectations. Women's empowerment became 'the clarion call' of the 1985-1995 decade (Batliwala 2007:2) and empowerment entered the official development lexicon. But the extent to which the concept's intrinsic features were integrated is a moot point.

With somewhat chameleon-like qualities, today, empowerment has become virtually *de riguere* in any policy and development document addressing women, the poor and (somewhat less frequently) other marginalized categories; it has even been adopted by commercial enterprises keen to project their 'corporate social responsibility.' Increased usage was not accompanied by precise definitions that would illuminate intended meaning, however so that examining the contents of "the rubric strongly suggest that the term is used to mean quite distinctly different things to those employing it." (Rowlands 1995: 101) To avoid this, the concept of women's empowerment used here can be summarized as "an increased ability to question, challenge and eventually transform unfavourable gendered power relations." (Wee and Shaheed 2008: 16) Several critical differences distinguish this concept of empowerment from what is conveyed in development policies and action plans. The first relates to transforming power relations. Differences are also visible in the dissimilar emphasis placed on individual agency versus collective action; the top-down approach of planning at odds with the bottom-up approach of movements; and planners single-focus itemized approach that is diametrically opposed to the holistic approach advocated by feminists.

The understanding of power marks a critical divergence between development planners and social movements; the former tend to ignore existing power arrangements and rarely address them head-on, the latter specifically aim to change these. For feminists and other social movement activists empowerment must entail a process of individual and social transformation that realigns power relations and systems. In other words:

> The crux of women's empowerment lies in the transformation of the gendered relations of power that systematically disempower them. There is no magical shortcut that can empower women by bypassing fundamental issues of power. (Wee & Shaheed 2008:18)

Amongst other things, the process entails cycles of reflection, analysis and action (from the Freire school of thought); a cognitive process through which those who are disempowered (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their lives, (b) develop or acquire the wherewithal to take some measure of control over their lives and (c) collectively work to

rearrange in some measure the power relations operative in their lives.[3] (Stromquist 1995, Rowlands 1995, McWhither 1991)

The relative importance accorded collective versus individual empowerment is a second critical difference in the perspective of development planners and feminists. It is generally agreed that empowerment requires the active agency of people who are (or were previously) disempowered by existing arrangements of social, economic and political structures claiming and achieving systemic and structural changes. (Kabeer, 2001) Within the sizeable body of empowerment literature focused on agency, there is consensus that the active agency of people for empowerment means that empowerment is not something that can be 'done to' or 'gifted' to others. But, for social movements desiring to alter structures, individual empowerment processes individual agency is a pre-requisite for challenging the status quo, but is insufficient since empowerment is not about improving the lives of individual women within current arrangements, but about creating alternatives and new gender orders. Only through collectivised actions aiming to redress power inequalities can the gender system be altered. People's agency has been emphasized by others such as Amartya Sen, for example, who critiques the mistaken but persistent belief amongst planners that macro-level economics and policy setting can simply pull people along as 'patients' of development as if only policy makers and development planners have agency. Hence planning must factor in the agency of people that development plans and schemes are intended to benefit. (Sen 1999) This is easier said than done and in any case, agency alone even of disempowered women does not necessarily promote social justice or restructure gender relations as sadly evident in Rwanda and elsewhere.[4]

Grappling with how women as an essentially disempowered group can mobilise or create sufficient power to influence the systems and structures they inhabit led to conceptualizing different types of power: power over (usually seen as coercive power to make others comply), power to (as capability), power within (as cognitive ability, self-confidence or [inspirational] leadership) and power with (collective actions, alliances, etc.). (Stromquist 1995, Kabeer 2001, Mosedale 2005) While these distinctions may help understanding, most analytical writings that distinguish different types of power fail to address the basic question of how power is actually distributed in society (Rowlands 1995) – a starting point for the cognitive capacity that would enable change.

It is unfortunate that the more empowerment has come to be used in the development discourse, the more it has become delinked from its root word power. (Wee & Shaheed 2008, Mason and Smith 2003, Rowlands 1995) Indeed, the danger is that empowerment "has been 'mainstreamed' in development discourse in a manner that has virtually robbed it of its original meaning and strategic value." (Batliwala 2007) How far usage has drifted from its original intent can be illustrated by empowerment concepts of commercial enterprises. Take for example the boast of one South Asian apparel company that it aims to "set the global apparel industry standard for compliance by developing Women Go Beyond, *a programme to educate and empower its 92 percent female workforce."* (emphasis added) [5] The means by which the company proposes to

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[3] This is adapted from Rowlands (1995) summarizing the position of McWhither (1991) based on the WEMC analysis.

[4] See for example Sarah Marie Blizzard, "*Women's Roles in the 1994 Rwanda Genocide and the Empowerment of Women in the Aftermath*"; and Carrie Sperling: *Mother of atrocities: Pauline Nyiramasuhuko's role in the Rwandan genocide.*

[5] "Go Beyond" was featured as the cover page story in *World Business* in October 2006. It states "MAS has set the global apparel industry standard for compliance by developing Women Go Beyond, a programme to educate and empower its 92

'empower' women (according to the on-line information) are activities that earlier probably would have been called 'staff development' that is, skills in computer and English language, assets that will help individual women advance their careers or salaries. No analysis of structures and dynamics of power. Even more telling is the next sentence: "MAS is trying to differentiate itself strategically from a horde of low-cost competitors throughout the developing world." The aim is not to question existing power relations but to bring about a more competitive workforce. Instead of altering power structures and dynamics, in this instance 'empowering women' has been harnessed to give a particular commercial enterprise a competitive advantage *within* existing systems.

It would appear that in an increasingly bewildering world in which people feel progressively less in control over events that directly impact their lives[6] - in other words feel disempowered or powerless - the appeal of 'empowerment' stems from its ability to evoke a feel-good promise of empowered individuals exercising far greater control in their everyday lives. Conceptually, however, this suggests that power is 'a kind of stuff that can be possessed by individuals in greater or lesser amounts' (Young 1990:31) and, furthermore, can be handed over to women (or other disempowered people) who will be instantaneously transformed into empowered beings. The fallacy is the implication that people live in power vacuums.

People are not disempowered by either choice or coincidence; they are made and kept disempowered through existing systems and structures of governance that benefit particular groups. People's lives are embedded in multiple webs of power that are sometimes concentric but can also be over-lapping and contradictory. For the disempowered to become empowered, requires that existing systems and structures be revamped. This can only be achieved if, as a first step, people question and reject the legitimacy of existing arrangements of power and then take action to contest these. The process is a complicated one however for webs of power intersect, impact and play out in women's lives at the level of personal decision-making especially within the family, through informal structures of decision-making at the community level as well as the formal mechanisms for decision-making in state institutions and the political process.

The space available to a woman to challenge disempowering structures depends on various factors determining the particular gender system she inhabits with its gender-specific normative prescriptions as well as on how she is personally situated within this. Available space can differ in diverse aspects of her life. Just because women are included and acknowledged as essential to economic productivity does not mean that they enjoy equivalent space and decision-making in the bedroom, (Mason and Smith 2003) and greater decision-making in one sphere of life does necessarily transfer to another sphere - not least because different power dynamics may be operating in different aspects of a woman's life.(Wee and Shaheed 2008) Differing perspectives on the inter-linkages between various life spheres constitutes a third divergence between development planners and feminist concepts of empowerment.

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percent female workforce. Most corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes have little to do with a company's strategy, but MAS is trying to differentiate itself strategically from a horde of low-cost competitors throughout the developing world." <http://www.enewsbuilder.net/globalcompact/e_article000776336.cfm>

[6] See for example the analysis in the 200_ Plan of Action of the international solidarity network Women Living Under Muslim Laws. < http://www.wluml.org/node/564>

Development planning and attendant governance structures tend to be sector-specific (e.g. agriculture, health education etc.) geared to address sector-specific issues without viewing people's lives as a whole. The resulting development empowerment discourse has led to terminology which is somewhat misleading. Commonly used terms such as 'political empowerment', 'legal empowerment' 'economic empowerment' mistakenly suggest that it is sufficient to ameliorate women's decision-making in one sphere to make her empowered in all aspects. Importantly, this shifts the focus from *women* as conscious agents reflecting, analyzing, deciding and taking action to the *domain* in which they have selected to act. Ignoring the power structures operative in women's lives, development initiatives implies that improving a particular right (legislation on gender-based violence), or access to some specific resource (e.g. micro-credit or education), or service (e.g. health) or instituting affirmative action (political representation quotas) is sufficient to change gender relations. Empirical evidence contradicts this. For example, the Pakistan component of the *Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts: gender poverty and democratisation from the inside out* (WEMC) shows that when women access legal assistance, this alleviates one source of pressure on women and provides immediate relief without necessarily empowering them. The case study indicates that at the end of the day (mostly young) women who successfully obtained a divorce to escape an abusive or unsuitable marriages thanks to legal aid provided by civil society groups were unable to decide their life options including whether and who they should marry in the future. (Chaudhry 2009) In some sense therefore, legal assistance is equivalent to receiving medical treatment: patients may recovery from the immediate ailment without necessarily becoming empowered. A basic challenge for development interventions is that simultaneously addressing the different sources of women's disempowerment is something that development planning may not be best equipped to address while feminists maintain that unless at least one cluster of power dynamics are altered, gender relations will not change.

This is not to argue that better health, legal aid and other facilities and improved rights are not needed. On the contrary such measures are vital for an environment that is conducive for women's empowerment. Supportive interventions do not, however, always lead to "a catalytic shift in thinking that questions and ultimately overturns the legitimacy of existing power configurations and simultaneously brings about a legitimation of new relations, intended or actual," and conducive environment must not be confused with women's empowerment which "unavoidably de-stabilises and disrupts existing power relations." (Wee and Shaheed, 2008:19)

A disconnect between the visions of empowerment in development agencies versus social movements is to be expected. And, notwithstanding differences in perspectives - some of which appear fairly fundamental - feminist thinking and advocacy have reoriented development planning in the last decades. The question is to what extent? What happens to dynamic analytical concepts such as 'empowerment' when it is mainstreamed? What happens when empowerment is fragmented into 'manageable' bite-size boxes of logical frameworks, quantifiable targets and project planning and monitoring documents such as the PC-1 to PC-5 development forms in Pakistan?

Women and development planning

Until the 1975 first UN World Conference on Women (Mexico), development planning was gender-blind, based on the now infamous 'trickle down' theory that presumed that the benefits of

planned development would automatically reach women and other marginalized sections of society. The UN Decade for Women (1975-1985) fundamentally changed the way women were perceived in development planning. From passive recipients of welfare oriented assistance to being viewed as "equal partners with men, with equal rights to resources and opportunities" without whose full participation development was not possible. (Vijayamohanan, Asalatha and Ponnuswamy, 7). Development approaches shifted from demands to include women in the Women in Development (WID) framework to demanding equity for women (Women and Development or WAD) to suggesting alterations in gender relations in the Gender and Development (GAD) approach and finally to empowerment. WID was discarded because, as argued by critics, the issue was not how to include women in development processes – development models depended on women's subordinate position and existing gender relations for success – but how to ensure women derived equal benefits from development. The WAD equity approach aimed to meet women's strategic needs including through legislative measures; GAD underlined the gendered basis of society and developmental work and the need to reorient this, but still through top-down development interventions and legislative measures. GAD remains in common usage along with Gender Mainstreaming. The use is not without problems.[7] With the changing approaches, development planning in South Asia replaced the previous charity approach to women with a more developmental one in the mid 1980s started including women's concerns in Five Year Development Plans. Yet, notwithstanding policy commitments to equality of opportunity, the ground reality for most women changed far less than the promises held out through such articulations. (See Mazumdar on India and Shaheed 2004 on Pakistan)

Increased rhetoric of 'participation' in development plans and policies rarely translated to meaningful participation of grassroots women in planning processes, the top-down approach harnessed to economic growth-driven development models that left unchallenged the patriarchal equation that oppressed women. Gender equality requires reorganizing both gender roles and institutional arrangements in society and state, family and the market, the judiciary and the local community self-governance structures. Altering the balance, dynamics and practice of power from women's perspective including "the mediating structures of class, race, ethnicity, caste and religion" was precisely what concepts of empowerment proposed. (Gurumurthy and Batliwala 2009)

If feminists – including those in South Asia – started using the term 'empowerment' as a multifaceted concept much earlier (and a few donors started supporting civil society empowerment initiatives[8]), the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing marks a turning point in mainstream development discourses of national as well as international planners and international financial institutions.[9] Aided by substantial inputs from the transnational women's movement, the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action was conceptualized as

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[7] 'Gender mainstreaming', term has led to other problems starting with the lack of any accepted definition of what it means. Without such definition, it is nearly impossible to track financial budgets for women-specific interventions. Furthermore the constant use of gender instead of women muffles the fact of women's disempowered/disadvantaged /discriminated against position.

[8] For example, CIDA (Canadian International development Agency) and the Norwegian agency NORAD.

[9] Attesting to increased attention to gender issues prior to the conference, the UNDP's 1995 Human Development Report (HDR) added a Gender Development Index (GDI) and a Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) to supplement the Human Development Index (HDI).

an empowerment framework for women by simultaneously addressing twelve areas considered most critical at the time. National and international development agencies adopted the approach and by 1999 the "empowerment of women in the economic and social fields" became "one of the fundamental objectives of all development efforts" (ESCAP 1999) and linked to reducing poverty. So much so that "today almost every agency has an empowerment division attached to its anti-poverty policy forum" (Vijayamohanan et al. 2009: 33)

The adoption of the term by the United Nations system, international finance institutions (e.g. the World Bank and Asia Development Bank) as well as bilateral development agencies catalysed concerted efforts to 'measure' empowerment.(See e.g. Narayan, CIDA, Williams, Mason and Smith, Mason. Alsop, Alsop et. al, Koggel) This urge to measure progress is yet another point of bifurcation between development planners and activists. Planned development interventions are intended to facilitate growth and ameliorate the existing situation and, of necessity, tied to measuring progress and impact. But the pursuit of 'efficient' measurement tools has meant that the holistic concept of women's empowerment as challenging the factors and actors that keep them disempowered dissolved into fragmented items suitable for measuring–usually tracking individual acts such as going to the market and decision-making (from what to cook to who to vote for) etc.

Complicating matters in South Asia is the significant dependency on international assistance for development purposes, with attendant conditionalities and accountability issues. Apart from national governments holding themselves accountable to the donors, rather than either citizens or civil society groups,[10] when donors "moved wholesale…to the empowerment approach (whatever that meant), [they] more or less compelled their implementation partners to adopt the language of empowerment, if not its content.' (Batliwala 2009: 2) Testifying to this, a net search for empowerment and women in Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives as well as Bangladesh brings forth the programmes of international and bilateral development agencies and banks rather than national documents.[11] After a decade of enthusiastic adoption and signaling some frustration, by 2005 some bilateral development agencies started to recognise that while

> There is a broad consensus on what the priorities are for achieving women's empowerment… we are far from achieving these in practice and there is little understanding of how to achieve them…What works in one context does not appear to work in others…Organisations and decision makers working to empower women therefore need to know more about what strategies work, which ones don't and why this is the case in different situations. [12]

The following section reviews some of the plans and policies for women's empowerment: India's *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women* (2001), Pakistan's *National Policy for*

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[10] Marjorie Mbilinyi 2001 cited in Ann Whitehead, *Failing women, Sustaining Poverty: Gender and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers*

[11] For example: Family Health International http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Pubs/wsp/fctshts/Bangladesh1.htm, The Asia Foundation. Women's Empowerment Program. Nepal http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/WEPNepal.pdf, Asian Development Bank. (1999) *Women in Nepal: Country Gender Assessment*, http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/Country_Briefing_Papers/Women_in_Nepal/default.asp#contents; (2001) *Women in Bangladesh: Country Briefing Paper*,
http://www.adb.org/documents/books/country_briefing_papers/women_in_bangladesh/ (2004) *ABD to promote Greater Empowerment for Nepal's most Disadvantaged Women.*
http://www.adb.org/Documents/News/2004/nr2004177.asp ;

[12] Department for International Development (DFID) 2005. *The UK's contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.* 2005, London: HM Government, p.28

Development & Empowerment of Women (March 2002) and Afghanistan's *National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan* (2007-2017) and contrasts this with the Sri Lankan 1993 *Women's Charter*, which does not once use 'empowerment.' Available materials from national plans of action to give effect to the Beijing Platform for Action from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have also been consulted.

From theory and documents to praxis and reality: South Asia women's empowerment policies

South Asia, home to one fifth of the world's population (close to 1.5 billion) living in an area which is only two fifths the size of the USA or China, is characterized by contrasts: grinding poverty afflicts an estimated 40 percent of its people who often live cheek by jowl with world-standard super-rich e.g. in Bombay. The region has produced the highest number of female heads of state and government of any sub-region, but this presence at the top has done little to alleviate the lot of the average woman or to change the rigid patriarchal norms of society that keep them disempowered. Despite women occupying top leadership positions in government, the actual participation rates of women in the legislatures is surprisingly low; it would be lower still were it not for affirmative action measures reserving quotas for women. More alarming is that South Asia is the only region where males outnumber females, leading to deep and growing concern about what Amartya Sen called 'the missing women' estimated at about 100 million worldwide (Sen 1999,418,297). *Excluding* China and South Asia, females constitute 50.4 percent of the population in the developing world, or global South. In other words, only in China and South Asia do males outnumber females (who comprise only 48.5 percent of the population) and the disparity is growing.[13] In India, females make up only 48.41 percent of the population; in the rest of South Asia 48.94 percent. A 2005 UNFPA study in India[14] found that sex ratios had declined from 48.59 percent in 1991 to 48.11 percent in 2001; in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, the ratio is a drastic 44 percent (less than 800 girls for every 1,000 boys). (Henry 2005) It is not that women simply die since life expectancy for women in South Asia *exceeds* that for men by at least 2-3 years. Of concern, the sex disparity is greater in the more affluent neighbourhoods of Delhi where prospective parents use all the latest medical technology, including pre-conception gender selection practices, amniocentesis and late-term abortions, to support their culture-bound son-preference. While the cause of missing women is being debated, (see e.g. Henry 2005, Anderson and Ray 2009) no one is contesting the fact that large numbers are in fact "missing," a trend development planning has notably failed to reverse.

All the policy documents under review, including Sri Lanka's 1993 *Women's Charter*, emphasise constitutional guarantees of gender equality and freedom from discrimination and reference (in greater or lesser details) as well as obligations under international instruments, especially CEDAW. (Exceptionally, the Afghan policy document starts with the various

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[13] The Chinese 2002 Census reported the sex ratio for live births had dropped to 46.7%.

[14] United Nations Population Fund. 2005. *Missing…Mapping the Adverse Child Sex Ration in India*

international pacts such as Bonn Agreement.) Both the Charter and the policy documents commit states to eliminating discrimination in all spheres of life; they all refer to the need to bolster women's political participation, rights to economic activity and better conditions of work and benefits, to health, and to education. So what has the empowerment approach added?

Sri Lanka's *Women's Charter* derives not from the Beijing Platform, but from the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The Charter's Preamble asserts its intention "to ensure justice and equity and the recognition of gender equality in all areas of life" and Part I, Clause 1 commits the state to "the full development and advancement of women." Most of the clauses derive from the substantive CEDAW articles on discrimination and legal entitlements. The stated goal of the 2001 Indian *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women* is "to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women." (Para 1.11) The Goal of the 2002 Pakistan *National Policy for Development & Empowerment of Women* is "Empowerment of Pakistan women, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, or other consideration for the realization of their full potential in all spheres of life." The Afghan *National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan* (NAPWA) has a three-fold mission: "(a) eliminating all forms of discrimination against women; (b) developing women's human capital; and (c) ensuring women's full participation and leadership in all aspects of life in Afghanistan." (page 13)

Eliminating discrimination and advancing women's development and rights are common to the Charter and to the empowerment policies/plans. A significant difference is the absence in the Charter of any reference to facilitating "women to realize their full potential" a phrase consistently used in all the empowerment–labeled documents including the new Sri Lankan Plan of Action. Hence, empowerment-labeled development documents acknowledge that women's empowerment requires a multi-pronged approach and that the ultimate aim must be to enable women to be their own agents with the freedom to pursue their dreams and ambitions. Perhaps attesting to accumulated learning, the 2007 Afghan NAPWA[15] is the only policy document which distinguishes between its twin goals of women's empowerment and gender equality. It defines these two as:

> Gender equality is a condition where women and men fully enjoy their rights, equally contribute to and enjoy the benefits of development, and where neither is prevented from pursuing what is fair, good, and necessary for living a full and satisfying life.

> Women's empowerment, on the other hand, is a condition where women take control and determine the direction of their lives, develop their full potential, make enlightened decisions, and exert positive influence over processes, mechanisms, and decisions that affect their well-being. (Paragraph 4.3)

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[15] Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,2007, *National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan* (NAPWA)

Thus, empowerment is distinguished from the advancement of women/gender equality because it entails women taking control over their own lives such that it enables them to influence their environment. This is in keeping with the feminist concept of empowerment. Another distinct feature is the reference to, and acknowledgement of the role of women's organizations and activism in the process of empowerment in all empowerment-labeled documents. Only India's policy explicitly mentions the women's movement, acknowledging its "inspiring initiatives for women's empowerment.'[16] It is also exceptional in acknowledging a "patriarchal system" as having contributed to the subordinate status of women. None of the other policy documents mention either the women's movement or patriarchy as such. Instead the texts refer to NGOs and women's groups; skirting patriarchy, the language is variations of "harmful traditional practices that have shaped the current position of women in the family and society"[17] and commitments to eliminate 'all negative social practices.'[18]

Attesting to the difficulties encountered when official development plans and policies embrace the concept of empowerment are the contradictions within the texts between the analysis rooted in better conceptual understanding and the actual measures proposed which shy away from the implications of that very analysis. Other problems arise as a result of the perceived imperatives of those in power. One example that also illustrates the limits of the negotiating powers of feminists trying to work with government, is the Goal defined in the 2002 Pakistan Policy. The Policy was developed through a consultative process that included an editorial committee comprised of both government and civil society people. Having resolved the initial debate on whether the term empowerment as advocated by the civil society representatives should/could be used at all,[19] the committee drafted the goal as "Empowerment of Pakistani women, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, or other consideration for the realization of their full potential in all spheres of life, especially social, economic, personal and political." This collaborative draft was then finalised by the Ministry for Women Development that saw fit to add a qualifying phrase "and in keeping with our Islamic way of life." This begs the question of who will define the parameters and content of such an Islamic way of life; and how empowerment 'irrespective of religion' is to be achieved for women who do not fall within or measure up to the official notions of the 'Islamic way of life'. The amendment is a reminder that participation and consultation notwithstanding, non-governmental elements have little control over the final outcome. Moreover, while the policy stipulates "Ensuring that the government agencies adopt a gender sensitive approach to development in preparing needs based, participatory and implementable programmes and projects," (para 3.1) actual participation tends to be superficial, usually taking the shape of broad consultations involving a hundred people that renders meaningful contributions difficult. Even when consultation is more meaningful (e.g. the Policy and the National Plan of Action) implementation and concrete measures lag far behind as noted in the 2000 NGO review of the Beijing process,[20] and repeated in the NGO 10-year review. (Shaheed and Zaidi) The lack of implementation is not limited to Pakistan. Commentators in India note: "the bitter fact is that even the incorporation of practical gender needs into the development plans does not guarantee their implementation." (Vijayamohanan et al. 23)

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[16] Government of India, 2001, *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women*, Introduction para 1.6

[17] NAPWA, page 7

[18] Pakistan, 2002, *National Policy for the Development and Empowerment of Women*, para 3.4

[19] Personal knowledge as one of those on the drafting committee

[20] NGO Coordinating Committee for Beijing+5. 2000. *Pakistan NGO Review Beijing+5*

Indian activists seem to have been most successful in transforming theory into practice, persuading the government to concretise plans with a new approach: supporting new spaces for women to critically reflect and build collective power as they strategized to confront and transform the social and economic arrangements and cultural systems that subjugated them while simultaneously working to change policy and legislation as well as ensuring state accountability. Built upon a transformative notion of empowerment, the state's adoption of these measures was not "entirely altruistic, [however], but often sprang from an astute understanding that these women's empowerment processes might better enable the administration to deliver its schemes and services." (Gurumurthy and Baltiwala 7) Nevertheless, government support for women's groups was in keeping with the activist perspective of assisting women to recognize both their own agency and power to bring about socio-economic and political change through organized actions. The women's movement played a pivotal role in mobilizing, helping to establish and initially facilitating these spaces for the poorest and most oppressed women across the country. The results were positive. Then in the 1990s, as the pressure of Structural Adjustment Programmes (aiming at increased efficiency and productivity) mounted and even as 'empowerment' became the by-word for women-related development and poverty alleviation, government support in became more restrictive. Instead of supporting women's discursive spaces for collective actions that allowed women to define their own agendas as in the past, the key plank for women's development became Self Help Groups (SHGs) with target-based achievements in a "depoliticised and individualised version of the mobilization" that delinked empowerment from the dissymmetry of power structures and systems. (Gurumurthy and Baltiwala) Superficially, the two types of initiatives may appear to be similar but from an empowerment perspective, they are radically different. Supporting discursive spaces for women was a bottom-up approach that encouraged women's collective reflection and strategizing with flexibility to alter the specifics of programmes and priorities according to the women's own understanding and experience of what most oppressed them. In contrast the SHG approach boxes women into preset agendas and deliverables with a high risk of such groups being reduced to improving the efficiency of existing systems. The same criticism has been made of women-focused micro-finance projects that depend on women maximising their social capital and are assumed to automatically empower women. Ignoring "how gender inequality structures the ways in which different social capital can operate to the disbenefit of women," agencies like USAID and the World Bank have argued micro-finance "is a viable means of marrying gender, poverty and efficiency concerns." (Mayoux 440, 347) Underlying these schemes are presumptions that saving and credit directly contribute to individual economic empowerment because they allow women to decide about savings and credit use; that this 'economic empowerment' will convert automatically into the general well-being of women and their families (which are seen as one and the same thing) automatically enabling women to renegotiate gender relations within the household to access social and political empowerment.'(See Mayoux for a detailed analysis) The A lead to B leads to C logic leaves no room for the existence of gaps between the steps, other

factors that can impede women's progress or for rethinking and changing directions, that is for the agency of women and others they interact with.

It is worth noting that discursive spaces were self-identified by woman as pivotal for empowerment across all the countries and research sites of the WEMC research consortium.[21] Perhaps counter-intuitively, this need is prioritized by women over access to and linkages with specific government services and institutions, including health and education. On reflection, of course it makes perfect sense for such meeting grounds allows women a venue for collective analysis and strategy planning not just for a specific problem faced at a particular moment of time but as a mechanism to respond to changing circumstances and new challenges as these present themselves. Such avenues require nurturing however and are unlikely to emerge from the kind of women's groups planned interventions seem to envisage such as the Afghan NAPWA commitment to support women's groups. The plan states:

> "Women's solidarity circles will also be encouraged, beginning with the civil service and in non-traditional sectors for women. A culture that encourages female leadership, male-female partnership, solidarity and mutual respect will be promoted within institutions." (paragraph 4.3)

The Afghan plan does not elaborate on how these women's circles are to be established, while starting with the civil service seems a curious choice, at odds with the idea of autonomous women's groups as spaces for collective reflection, strategising and action. Furthermore, the Afghan women's movement is in its infancy with far less negotiating power than the long-established strong women's movement in India (in terms of numbers, groups, and concepts). It is therefore highly questionable whether the experience of India (even with its subsequent problems) could be replicated in Afghanistan despite the NAPWA's call for "women and men [to] re-conceptualize their relations in the light of demands and challenges posed by national reconstruction." (paragraph 4.3) Although it does not use the word empowerment, the Pakistan 1998 National Plan of Action for Women too promises to support women's groups. In practical terms however, this has largely meant a few partnerships with better resourced and connected CSOs on specific projects such as CEDAW reporting and developing policy documents. The heavily aid-dependent and cash strapped government has not been in any position to provide financial support for CSOs and funding has largely come from donors and international development agencies. Participation of women's organizations is an old formulation however and the Sri Lanka *Women's Charter* also commits the state "to promote the participation of women in organizations and associations that are involved in trade union and political activity" (2 (ii)). The difference in the Indian policy was the active involvement of women and the bottom-up approach and flexibility provided with the support.

Sources of Power

In the final analysis, despite the liberal use of the term empowerment, a crucial lacuna in development planning is a failure to come to grips with and to address the admittedly complex power dynamics involved in women's lives and the sources from which power is derived. Empowerment is only possible if the dissymmetry of power between women and men (and other basis of exclusion/inclusion in power structures) is acknowledged, confronted and reduced. Empowerment processes need to address the thorny question of how to change the equation(s) of

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[21] See WEMC *Annual Report 2008-9*

power that modulate women's lives; to find strategies to loosen the hold of power clumped together in tight circles of influence and jealously guarded by those who exercise it. To illustrate the gap between theory and practice three power arenas are briefly reviewed: land and poverty, political participation and governance, and gender-based violence.

All of the documents reviewed note the disempowered status of women, especially of rural women. Yet the proposed solutions fail to address the source of power in rural settings, i.e. land. The most striking case is that of the Indian *National Policy for the Empowerment of Women* (NPEW) that acknowledges in paragraph 2.3 that "The evolution of property rights in a patriarchal system has contributed to the subordinate status of women" and promises to "encourage changes in laws relating to ownership of property and inheritance…to make them gender just." Having said this, the actual measures proposed for women's economic empowerment (paragraphs 5.1-5.3) do not make any mention of land at all despite evidence that women's rural cooperatives can change women's lives and power dynamics. (Agarwal 2002, 2003) In like fashion, the Introduction to the Afghan NPAWA recognizes that

> "Land, which is a highly valued economic capital, especially in an agricultural economy like Afghanistan, is generally owned by men. The loss of women's inheritance entitlements to male relatives upon the death of a husband is another reason why very few women own land, a factor that reinforces the economic vulnerability and dependency of women, especially those who are heads of households," (page 9)

Recognition is not accompanied by provisions for increasing women's access to this critical resource and source of power. None of the policy or plans ensures women's access to land (as well as other immovable property). That women themselves are cognisant of the importance of such assets is evident from the empirical findings of the WEMC research in Pakistan. Asked their views on empowerment and gender-based differences in power differentials, [22] rural women identified ownership of land and the homestead (as well as male earnings) as a key factor for men's greater empowerment across provinces. In contrast the policy documents uniformly offer women:

- Acknowledgement of women's contribution and promises to make this contribution visible,[23]

- Improved skills/vocational/market oriented training

- Enhanced extension services and training in different agriculture and livestock related activities

Luckily this seems to be changing finally. The new 2009-2013 Sri Lanka Plan of Action for women promises to ensure housing to women (point 4.15), assist women in inheritance and to

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[22] Shirkat Gah WEMC project – transcripts of interviews and focus group discussions.
[23] Pakistan Policy paragraph 5.2 (a); Indian Policy paragraph 5.3. Afghan Plan paragraph 1. I ii.

provide advice on accessing benefits and compensation including land (point 4.18). In Pakistan, the government introduced a land scheme for rural women with financial support and extension services in 2008 as a small pilot project; and the first crops are standing.[24] The scheme was only piloted in Sindh province, but on learning about it women in Punjab have been inspired to form two peasant women associations in the hopes of pushing for a similar scheme.[25]

Enhanced decision-making is a crucial agreed-upon ingredient for empowerment. Women's lack of decision-making about their own bodies is central to the power-disempowerment-empowerment matrix that helps to maintain prevalent gender inequalities. The all-important role of reproductive and sexual rights was highlighted in feminist concepts of empowerment. (Batliwala 2007 and 2009) Only exceptional women exercise any significant quantum of control over their sexuality, starting with whether, when and who to marry; whether when and how many children to bear – not to mention when and with whom to become sexually active. Shirkat Gah-WEMC research underscores that control over female sexuality frequently underlies other forms of control, including threatened or actual gender-based violence. (WEMC) The distressing data on gender based violence across South Asia suggests that this constitutes an area in which development plans and interventions such as new laws and legal assistance programmes have made little difference despite stated commitments to address the needs of the most vulnerable women and gender-based violence.

As noted in the new Plan of Action in Sri Lanka, "An extremely important issue that needs addressing is violence against women. They are subjected to violence in their homes, at their places of work and when they travel about. It has no barriers such as wealth, education, social status, race or religion. It is prevalent in all strata of the society."[26] Previously, the Chairperson of the National Committee on Women had expressed concern about rising incidents of violence against women and sample surveys suggesting that 60 percent of women are victims of domestic violence. In India, it was estimated that every 6 hours, a young married woman is burned alive, beaten to death, or driven to suicide; around 15,000 women suffer dowry-related violence each year. A nation-wide survey indicated that nearly half of all women experience least one incident of physical/psychological violence in their lifetime. Similarly, in Bangladesh, an estimated 47 percent of women experience some physical violence at the hands of their intimate partners; each week more than 10 women suffer acid attacks, leaving them brutally disfigured, blind disabled; 32 percent women working outside homes have to disrupt work due to incidents of domestic violence. In Pakistan, 80 percent of women experience violence in homes. (Suna) Despite non-reporting, in 2002, over 450 Pakistani women and girls were killed by relatives in so-called 'honour killings', and at least as many were raped. (HRCP)

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[24] A recent review indicates the pilot was not without problems, with land being reclaimed by powerful locals, some women being given land that was arid or even parts of graveyards. (Habib Khan Ghori)
[25]Shirkat Gah WEMC project also facilitated their registration process.
[26] Message by Sumedha G. Jayasena, Minister of Child Development and Women's Empowerment, *Plan of Action 2009-2013* p. 2

Without exception all development documents identify gender based violence as a key obstacle and promise to take steps to rectify this through legislative reforms and providing support mechanisms. The Afghan NAPWA states its intentions to criminalise and prosecute "traditional practices harmful to women's emotion, social and economic well-being…including forced marriages," (Section V (c)) other policy documents are less specific. But, the persistent violence experienced by women in across South Asia attests to the need to re-think interventions.[27] A basic problem identified by the previous UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women , Radhika Coomaraswamy is that "There's a lot of law writing, standard setting, programmes being planned, but the biggest problem…is that people are using culture and religion to deny women's rights.'[28] A UNFPA study on male attitudes to violence against women confirms this: an overwhelming majority of Bangladeshi men felt wives must be accountable to husbands and that violence is an acceptable form of corrective punishment for non-compliance; only 30 percent opposed general violence. A study of judicial attitudes in India indicated that almost half of all judges (48%) believe it is justifiable for a man to hit his wife on certain occasions; and almost three quarters (74%) feel family is the primary concern of women even within a violent marriage.[29]

This highlights two challenges for development planning: (1) how to change cultural attitudes and (2) how to address the inter-dependency of various factors in empowerment processes. Although all the government documents state intentions to change cultural attitudes,[30] planned interventions rarely go beyond gender sensitivity interventions and awareness-raising. Effective well-thought out and well-funded actions are rare. There is little to no concrete evidence to indicate that numerous sensitization and awareness raising activities to implement the Pakistan NPA have brought about change that has significantly empowered women. At best these may have reduced resistance to discuss gender issues on the part of bureaucrats. It will take more than 2-hour sessions to change to overcome outlook ingrained in a multitude of learned habits and attitudes. Culture operates at many levels but for women perhaps the most important are the circles of daily engagements: the meso-level of family and community, non-formal decision-making processes and traditional adjudication forums that exclude women as decision-makers but impact them nevertheless.

Concentric, often over-lapping and sometimes contradictory webs of power play out in women's lives: at the level of personal decision-making especially with the family, through informal structures of decision-making at the community level as well as the formal mechanisms for decision-making in state institutions and the political process. WEMC research indicates that women experience the most immediate control mechanisms that keep them disempowered within

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[27] India 7.1; Pakistan (4.4); Afghanistan 4.5 in chapter on Security as well as in chapters Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights; Sri Lanka para 16

[28] Radhika Coomaraswamy quoted in S. Cameron-Moore, 5 May 2005, 'Violence against women rising in South Asia: UN', Islamabad: Reuters, available at <http://www.dawn.com/2005/05/05/int11.htm>.

[29] Violence Against Women: The Law is Blind http://www.un.org.in/gender/images/VIOLENCEAGAINSTWOMEN.pdf

[30] See for example, the Sri Lanka National Plan of Action 2009-2013 paragraph 4.19

their immediate families and communities. (WEMC 2009) Apart from what girls and women are given to eat, compelled or forbidden to do within their homes, access to education, health facilities and economic opportunities are also controlled from within the house. But while a feminist perspective views women's empowerment as impossible without a re-shaping of the some gender system of some part of society, starting with the immediate family, policy makers have focused almost exclusively on decision-making in the public arena leaving decision-making in the family and community structures largely untouched.

Women's participation in political and administrative decision-making is one arena in which development planning and legislation has had positive impact. Even though women's political participation rates in South Asia remain low and women continue to be grossly under-represented in bureaucracy at decision-making levels, interventions in the shape of quotas and other affirmative action measures have enhanced women's involvement in decision-making processes. In particular, the induction of women into local government bodies such as the Panchayati system in India and the local government structure in Pakistan have contributed to empowering individual women. Decentralisation has helped to induct large numbers of women - often from low-income and socially marginalized groups - into the political process as elected councillors, many as first timers. In Pakistan a significant number of women councillors had some background in either civil society organizations or community welfare; quite a few were school teachers – not the usual background of politicians at the provincial and federal levels. (Shaheed 2003) Women's presence in these structures has enabled disadvantaged groups, including women to benefit from government services and schemes in the areas of welfare schemes and health outreach, employment and income generation, slum redevelopment, and water and sanitation services.[31] (WEMC, Vijayamohanan et. al) In India and Pakistan, local government functioned as a nursery for women's political apprenticeship and in Pakistan many councilors went on to become members of provincial assemblies. But as noted by analysts, while decentralization helped women become active participants, women are not a homogenous group with identical interests across class, ethnic, caste, religious and other identities. Women's increased political participation does not mean that they effectively represent the interests of less advantaged women.

In any case, women's ability to use the political arena for women's empowerment is impeded by a number of general problems: in South Asia formal channels and structures of political power are undermined by the politics of informal power brokerage; military and/or authoritarian rule has hampered the growth of a democratic ethos; even when democratic rule has been stable enough, e.g. in India, democracy is too often reduced to an electoral process lacking the mechanisms that would ensure accountability of elected representatives to their constituents. In any case, "women enter politics within highly patriarchal structures of society" (I.C.E.S. 21) operating in an environment dominated and shaped by men who devise the rules of the game. Successful women politicians adapt to and play by the existing rules. They are unlikely to challenge the structures that have brought them to power, or to support other female politicians who they may perceive to be rivals. Ironically enough, directly elected women politicians see themselves as representing their entire constituency not just women, and women rarely perceive female politicians as their champions. (I.C.E.S., Samiuddin) Yet obvious shortcomings

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[31] A good example of this top-down anti-poverty approach is the *Kudumbashree* programme (Poverty Eradication Mission) of Kerala. (Vijayamohanan et. al)

notwithstanding, Pakistan's experience of substantially enhanced women members of the national and provincial assemblies suggests that when there is a critical mass, far more legislation supportive of women's rights and equality is likely to be tabled and passed. However the process needs to be propelled by constant advocacy by women activists outside parliament and is facilitated when politicians have some direct linkages with social movements.

But if women are to be included in all levels of decision-making, this needs to start with the family, an area which is notably missing in most national plans despite the Beijing chapter on Power and Decision Making emphasising the need to change gender relations and roles within the household. An unhelpful presumption of planners is that development plans will be implemented in a table rasa situation. Little consideration is given to meso-level state and even less to the all-important non-state actors and institutions that exercise control over women (and others) such as the family of course, but caste and biraderi and other kinship systems as well as local adjudication mechanisms that parallel those of the state. This is illustrated by Diagrams 1 and 2 below.[32]
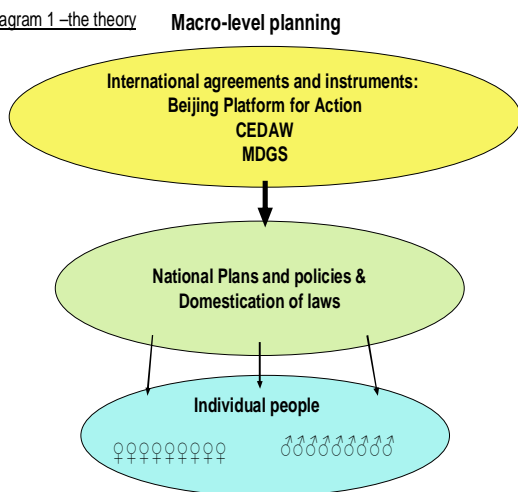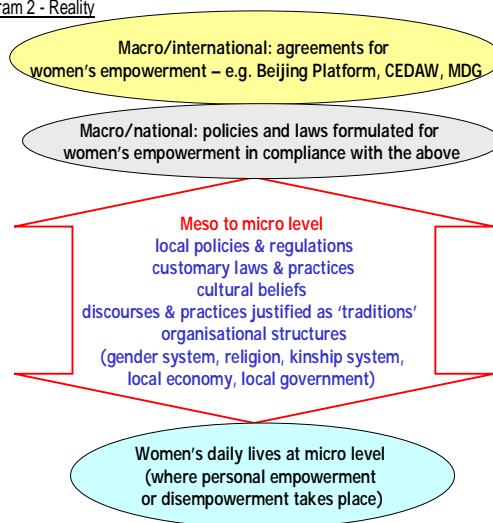
Across the region women's empowerment is hampered by the existence of parallel self-governance and adjudication structures that continue in parallel to the modern state (e.g. *salishes*, *panchayat*, *jirgas* etc.). Many predate independence and most have only been partly dismantled, and that too largely in urban centres. While excluding women from the decision-making their workings have repercussions for women's lives and potential empowerment initiatives. As illustrated in Diagram 2, located between women and the state these systems have a more immediate control over women's lives than the more distant state institutions. To support

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[32] Daigram 2 is from the power point presentation <<check title> *WEMC Research Proposal Presentation for DFID* January 2006 and Daigram 1 from Farida Shaheed. *Strategizing for Women's Empowerment,* Presentation at ESCAP-WEMC Forum, *Where's the Power in Women's Empowerment?,* UN ESCAP, Bangkok - August 4th 2008

women's empowerment planned interventions must also address these governance structures. Only the Afghan NAPWA says it will institute "formally defined boundaries within which traditional dispute mechanisms can be utilized for disputes pertaining to civil matters." (Section V. c) This conveniently glosses over the fact that 'civil matters' usually include all aspects of family life excepting domestic violence and that this will leave unchanged the negative ramifications of decision-making on women; it also fails to address how the government proposes to ensure that these mechanisms do not effectively block women's access to state institutions, benefits and legal entitlement.

As long as development planning fails to take into consideration the actual power dynamics confronting women in the specific gender system(s) they inhabit, they cannot bring about women's empowerment. Opening economic opportunities for women and promoting their political participation will not contribute effectively to women's empowerment unless these are accompanied by actions that will help women change the rules and practices of their daily lives. The need for a holistic approach to women's empowerment is underlined by the fact that although Sri Lanka has the longest history of women heads of state and government, women still only form 4 percent of the legislators. In contrast while Afghanistan now has some 33 percent women in the legislature, the profile of women on all other counts attests to severe discrimination. Similarly, India's projection as the new economic powerhouse contrasts with the growing differentials in the number of girls as compared to boys.

Empowerment through development planning: A Forced Marriage?

My review indicates a dissimilar perspective on and understanding of empowerment in development plans and policies designed to promote women's empowerment on the one hand and movement activists and empowerment theorists on the other. Indeed some perspectives are so diametrically opposed that raises the question of whether trying to achieve women's empowerment through planned development is not something of a forced marriage. Can the top-down approach inherent in development planning with its need for programmes, schemes and projects with pre-determined targets, projected outputs, itemized budgetary allocations and progress against an existing baseline (usually measured as quantitative macro progress), accommodate a bottom up approach? How can the tendency of planners to view beneficiaries as individuated citizens to be assisted by more efficient service delivery and wider opportunities within the existing system, be expected to provide the underpinnings for a process that hopes to challenge and change those very systems as advocated by activists? How realistic is it to expect development interventions to catalyse a process that enables women to challenge those forces they believe to be the most oppressive in their own life-contexts along a less directive, more organic and sometimes meandering trajectory? Is it possible to reorient development planning from being locked into sector-specific mandates narrowly focused on a particular aspect of a woman's life (be it access to justice or economic opportunities, shelters or health facilities) to address the many interstices that determine people's lives and the multiple factors and actors that keep women disempowered? Can planning really respond to advocates' call for actions that will support and promote a holistic, multi-faceted and flexible evolution in people's lives?

The experience so far is that development plans and policies have ameliorated the socio-economic conditions of women, improved legal entitlements, and bolstered political participation and decision-making; initiatives have enhanced women's self-confidence and some have even

led to individual women becoming empowered. But, gains have rarely converted into collective women's empowerment initiatives that can re-fashion more gender equitable rules and power relations. For this, the engagement of activists rather than national or international bureaucrats is necessary. Planned interventions can facilitate but never substitute the bottom-up process of empowerment: the collective reflection, analyses and action that unlocks women's agency in their own collective interests. Hence, the most that can reasonably be expected from top-down planned development is that it maximise measures (including legislative ones) that open up the spaces and opportunities for women to challenge the power dynamics they believe to be most problematic *and* that they feel capable of addressing at any given moment. Government interventions should extend support to such initiatives, but not try and direct them. Moreover, for development planning to support women's empowerment processes, constant persistent advocacy and pressure of activists in the women's movement is required. Thus, it becomes incumbent on the women's movement, autonomous women's groups as well as researchers to continuously identify the gaps in policies and to elucidate and articulate women's empowerment needs so these remain on the agenda of state institutions, political parties and international development agencies. It is important to recognise that structural and systemic changes will only come about through social movements. Rights-oriented democratically inclined civil society institutions can and must be strong advocates and negotiators for women as a whole but no matter how good-willed and committed they may be, CSOs cannot substitute for social movements.

In the final analysis, it may be more helpful for activists to think of empowerment in development planning not so much as a forced marriage, as negotiating an arranged South Asian marriage: a process that involves careful and sometimes protracted negotiations, checking credentials (how amenable but also how suitable which department and player is) through a constant engagement with development planners, implementers and government decision-makers.

For this arranged marriage to be successful, however, development planners must understand that helping women to better perform their current roles may only strengthen their subordination. Rather that shying away from the complexity of women's dis/empowerment, planning must take into consideration and be guided by the insights afforded by researchers and theorists of the myriad factors that keep women disempowered. A more comprehensive knowledge of the different sources of disempowerment and their interconnections will help to shed light on where and how women's lack of power may be overcome. Only with such understanding and a long-term perspective can activities, schemes and projects with transformative potential be planned. Accepting that the "content of transformation can never be decided in advance by planners, and certainly not with the 'simplified tools' that planners prefer to have at their disposal," planning must take into consideration that many disempowering factors in women's lives are deep-rooted, systemic and not amenable to short-term interventions. For their part, activists and women's groups must continue to develop and nurture collective discursive spaces for women and maintain pressure for government support for these. But it is essential to realise that while small feminist organisations may catalyse the most effective empowerment initiatives, their outreach is extremely limited compared to the vast reach of state structures and apparatus. While all efforts must be made to "stretch as far as possible the transformative potential" of development agencies and plans and projects, (Wiering, 844,845) activists need to be conscious that 'penetrating development agencies carries the price of giving up the goal of fundamental changes in favour of reformist ones.' (Kardam) It is important to realise that arranged marriages rarely – if ever –

meet all the desires of either party. The key is to see how best such a marriage can be arranged within the existing constraints.