




Women's Empowerment in Muslim Contexts
gender, poverty and democratisation from the inside out

Women's movements and other social movements: **why talk about this?**

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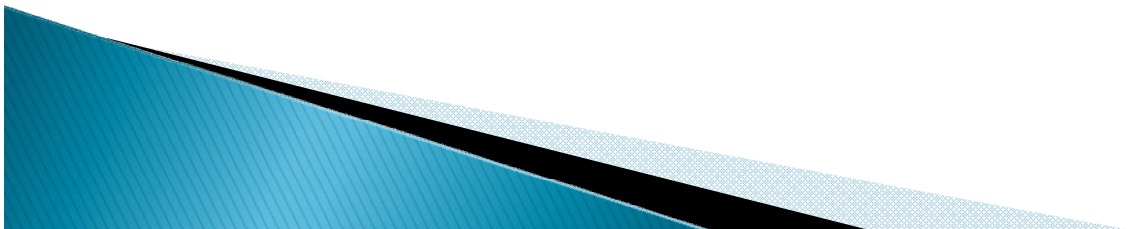
What is WEMC?

▶ **A Consortium of 8 Partners, launched on 1 July 2006:**

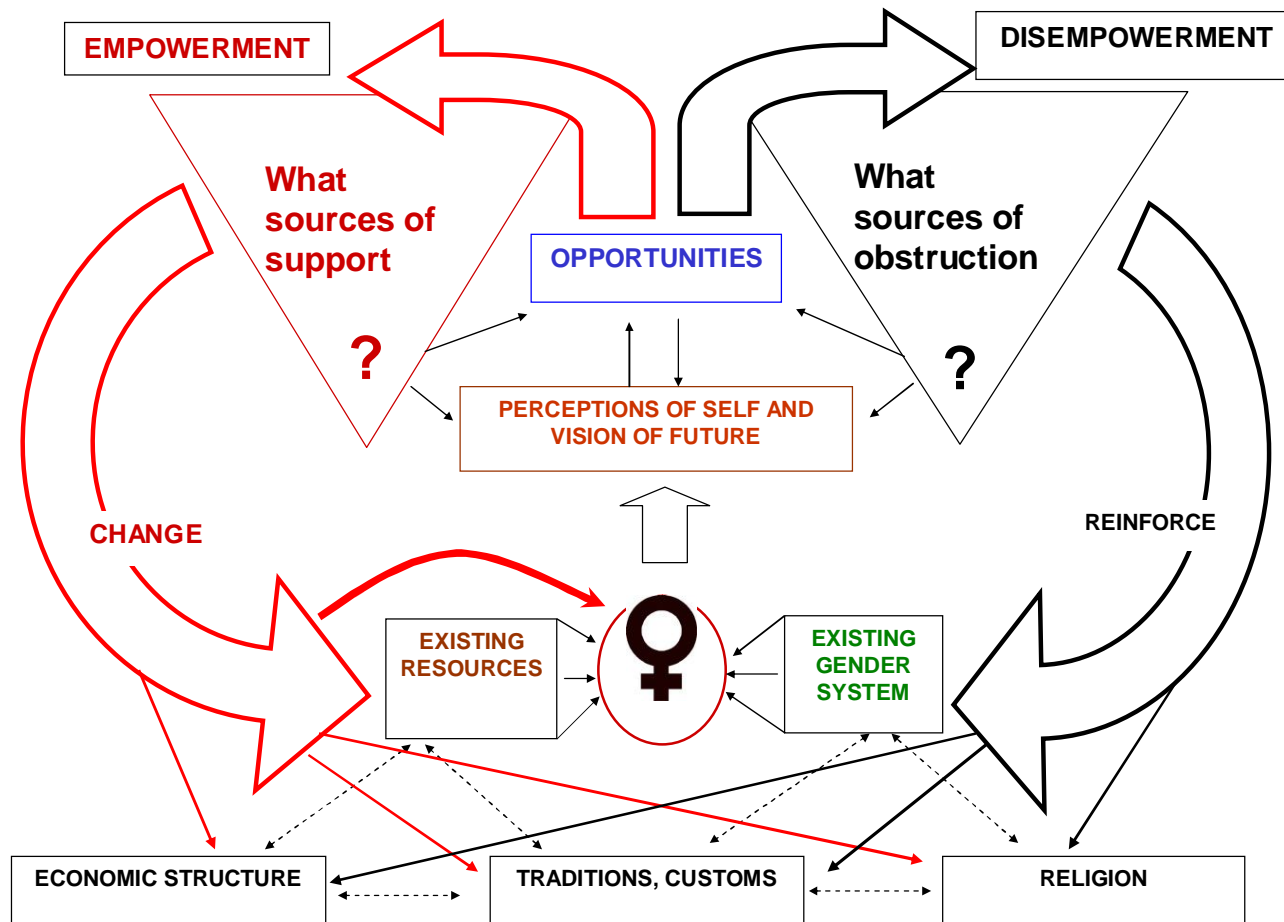
1. Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong (Lead Partner)
 2. Shirkat Gah Women's Resource Centre, Pakistan
 3. Centre for Environment, Gender and Development, HK
 4. Department of Community Health Sciences, Aga Khan University, Pakistan
 5. International Gender Studies Centre, Oxford University
 6. Semarak Cerlang Nusa, Indonesia
 7. Solidaritas Perempuan, Indonesia
 8. Women Living Under Muslim Laws (70-country solidarity network)
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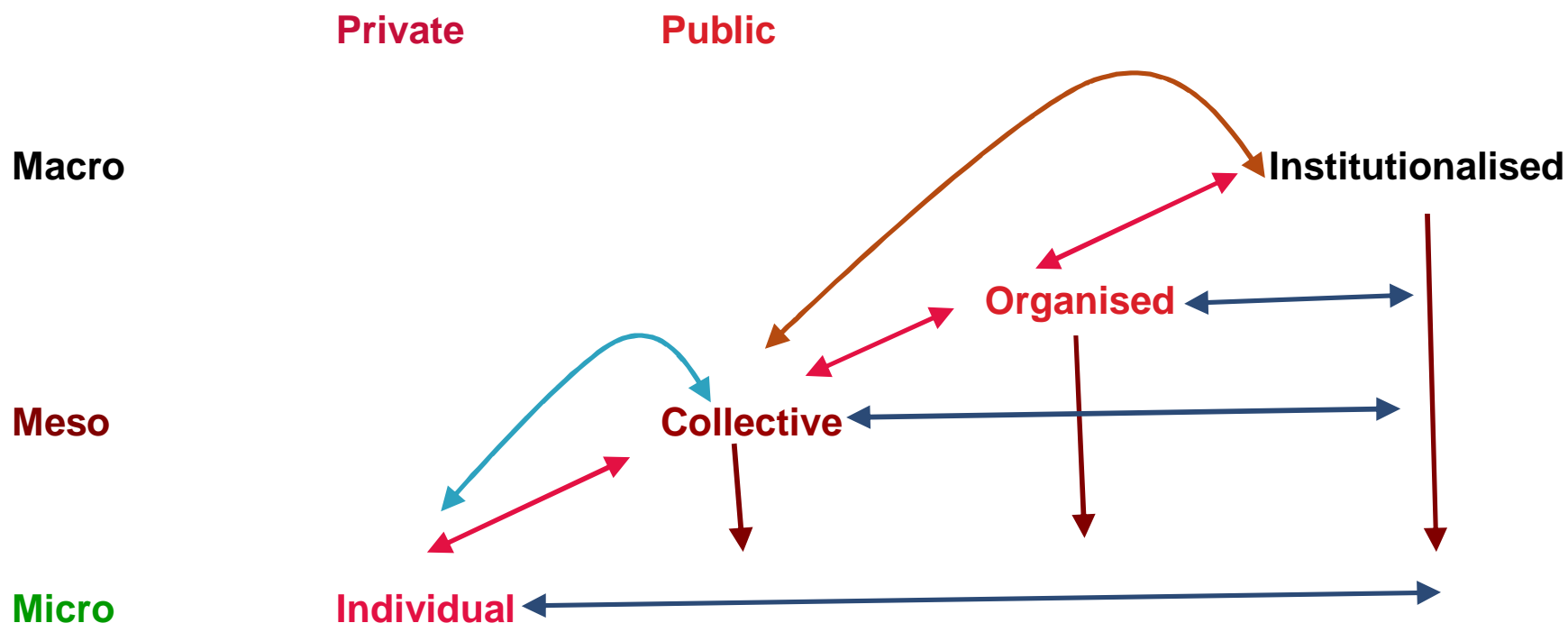
WEMC's understanding of 'women's empowerment'

- ▶ An increased ability to question, challenge and eventually transform unfavourable gendered power relations, often legitimised in the name of 'culture'
- ▶ Questions:
- ▶ How do women question, challenge and transform unfavourable power relations?
- ▶ How are unfavourable gendered power relations transformed – from what to what?



Sources of support *versus* Sources of obstruction





Read all about it: WEMC's research framework in *Women Empowering Themselves: A framework that interrogates and transforms* (2008).

Limited copies available at AWID Forum 08.

When women move to empower themselves:

1. Who opposes them?
Forces that are **against women's rights**
(Against women's rights as individuals but for the rights of wives and mothers? Why? Compulsory familism?)
2. Who supports them?
Forces that **support women's rights**
(Why? To what extent? With what agendas? To use women's issues for other purposes?)
3. Who stands aside and does nothing?
Forces that **regard women's rights as irrelevant or trivial**
(Because other issues are more important? Why?)



Negotiating alliances, overcoming oppositions

- ▶ Politics of opposition: alliances based on common enemies. Short-term? Only until the enemy has been overcome.
- ▶ Politics of transformation: alliances based on shared values and visions of the future. Long-term? How to prioritise women's rights across all issues?
- ▶ Why are women's rights not prioritised?
- ▶ Politics of **redistribution** (shares of the pie) *versus* politics of **restructuring** (re-baking a different pie)
- ▶ Priority for women's movements: locating women's rights at the centre of all movements aimed at restructuring state & society – class, environment, human rights, democratisation, labour, etc.

