

One Size Fits All Feminism?: Domestic Women's Rights Activists' Struggle to be Heard

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One Size Fits All Feminism?: Domestic Women's Rights Activists' Struggle to be Heard

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ABSTRACT

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The struggle between the needs of activists working within a local context and the international opinion of the best actions are often at odds within women's rights work. The international organizations have a disproportionate amount of power, as they can largely control whether domestic activists see the international support that would help their cause. International support can entail funding, awareness, pressure on governments, or the ability to be involved in international decisions in the future. This disparate power relationship can lead to toxic relationships in which domestic activists have to change their work to suit the international expectations. Even when domestic activists avoid working with international activists, there are constraints placed upon them because of the beliefs of international feminism. Two case studies of activists within Nigeria and India show how activists are restricted by this international pressure, as well as how they are adapting to make it work in their favor. The domestic organizations are sometimes able to bypass gatekeeping, allowing for more diversity within feminism, but it is still limited by the international community.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

International feminism frequently lacks in pluralism and diversity, instead choosing a monolithic understanding of what women's rights are and how they are to be practiced. Unfortunately the international ideas do not always line up with the goals of feminists based within countries. This discrepancy has created a division between the domestic and the international, preventing communication and understanding about the best ways to improve women's rights in the country.

The lack of pluralism in international feminism is surprising considering the movement's concentration on individual experiences and how these shape perspectives. One of feminism's primary theories is 'standpoint theory' which claims that people have authority over their experiences, and oppressed people are more likely to be able to see social reality.¹ Expanding this to organizations, those working in domestic organizations are more likely to have personal experience within the country, and therefore having a valid understanding of how to improve women's rights within their own context. Despite this, women's rights activists are being limited by a small group of activists who are already established on the international scene, with few newcomers from different experiences.

A common critique of international feminism is that there is a large disparity between 'first world' and 'third world' feminism. Mohanty noted that feminists from the global north tend to pay less attention to the experiences of women in the global south, either not adding them as part of the discussion or simply characterizing their experiences

¹ Kristina Rolin. "Standpoint Theory as a Methodology for the Study of Power Relations," *Hyptia* 24 no. 4., Fall 2009: 218.

in the same way, despite a great variety of cultures and issues with women's rights across the 'third world' countries.²

The problems of international feminism combined with domestic problems of states which provide large donations to other states (America, Germany, Australia, Canada, and others) to contribute to other women's rights activists, have spread to women's rights activism across the world. While it may not be a deliberate choice to exclude minorities who do not fall within certain parameters, in effect feminism has become exclusionary, making it difficult for a domestic women's activist organization to achieve international recognition without conforming to some pre-existing and unfair standards.

Despite the success of some domestic organizations in navigating the difficulties of international feminism, it has still been restrictive. While not debilitating, it has made organizations adjust messages and reprioritize their activism. No matter what route domestic organizations go through in order to achieve international recognition, there are restrictions placed upon them.

The research for this thesis has been qualitative, using existing research from political scientists and anthropologists working organizations. Other sources were written by domestic activists themselves, expressing their own experiences, as well as the websites and other published information of the organizations of interest. These practical discussions, when combined with theory, provide a more comprehensive analysis of the impacts of gatekeeping and other international impacts on domestic activism than is

² Chandra Talpade Mohanty. *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indiana University Press, 1991.

usually provided. The scope of the thesis cannot, due to research limitations, speak for how individuals receiving aid from the domestic organizations feel about the interactions, nor can it address the full nuances of funding, as organizations are not explicit with their financial decisions.

The Actors of International Feminism

If I am to argue that international access is important, I must first explain how international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) are influential. If INGOs did not impact international politics, restrictions on them would not be problematic for domestic NGOs. However, these organizations are a large part of international politics.

INGOs are frequently consulted for their more specific expertise on certain subjects. While states may be interested in a variety of issues, they cannot afford to specialize in the same way that INGOs do. An organization can afford to be a human rights (or even more specific such as women's rights) focused while states have to divide their attention among a multitude of issues. Even a state that is very interested in an issue, for instance the Netherlands are infamous for their support of human rights treaties, have to deal with economies, leadership elections, trade, and many other issues.

Clark presents INGOs as having two options for how they can go about achieving change.³ They can go through intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the United Nations, the European Union, and others, or they can use the network they have set up with each other, forming a far reaching independent form of diplomacy⁴. With these two avenues, INGOs can choose how they disseminate information. Clark cites the example

³ Anne Marie Clark, "Non-governmental Organizations and their Influence on International Society." *Journal of International Affairs* 48, 1995: 508

⁴ Clark: 513

of Amnesty International, which feeds “information into pertinent public and governmental channels for discussion, on the one hand, and distributing and promoting new human rights instruments on the other⁵.”

NGOs have become more influential, owing to their useful distinctions from states and IGOs. She notes that their funding is not dependent on stingy states, instead going directly to donors. They “acquire a substantive and historical expertise that may be unmatched even by government agencies⁶” and are consulted by governmental organizations such as the Human Rights Committee. INGOs become experts in their fields, and they help states and inter-state organizations make choices about what issues are important.⁷

Scholars see NGOs as creating an international community through repeated successful interactions. The DNGOs and INGOs work together, each using their strengths and weaknesses as they can, creating a more effective network of human rights through cooperation. This “transnational advocacy network” is usually assumed to have equal power and communication through all channels, theorized through Keck and Sikkink’s boomerang model.⁸ A domestic organization is pushing for some kind of reform, be it human rights, environmental or other. The state which they are working with refuses to aid them. They then go through this advocacy network, perhaps talking to similar organizations in other countries or to international organizations. These organizations provide support, potentially asking states and intergovernmental

⁵ Clark: 509

⁶ Clark: 516

⁷ Richard Price, “Transnational Civil Society and Advocacy” *World Politics*, 2003: 582.

⁸ Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. *Activists Beyond Borders*, New York, Cornell, 1998: 27.

organizations to step in with the issue. These states and IOs pressure the original state to work with the domestic organization.

Using the power and prestige of INGOs, domestic NGOs get to advocate for their issues even when the country in which they are based is not being cooperative. This model would provide for a lot of benefits to the domestic NGO, and allows the INGOs to get involved in domestic issues without having to expand to every given country. The transnational advocacy network allows for the passing of information, the use of symbols consistent between organizations, sharing resources for leverage, and a moral high ground, as organizations that are considered morally superior have leverage to claim that something is morally wrong and therefore should be fixed.⁹

When it works, it is a good model. However, with 1.5 million NGOs in the United States alone¹⁰ an organization cannot pressure all of the governments at the same time. They can provide support to many; build a rapport with an organization that is closely aligned with its interests. This is a transnational advocacy network. But there are still many DNGOs which are not invited to be a part of that network, which do not gain the advantages of this community.

Mackie provides us with a number of positive examples of the use of this international community. Japanese, Singapore, and Hong Kong feminist organizations have been working on advocacy cases for migrant workers and marriage migrants despite

⁹ Keck and Sikkink

¹⁰ "Fact Sheet: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) In the United States." *Human Rights.gov*. <http://www.humanrights.gov/2012/01/12/fact-sheet-non-governmental-organizations-ngos-in-the-united-states/>

their differences and distortion in privileges.¹¹ These more well off feminists have been using their influence and money to help bring attention to the cause and push for their governments to regulate these issues, hopefully eventually eradicating the issue.

In this theory, it is possible to see international activists working very positively with domestic ones. International organizations have a variety of capabilities that make them valuable to the domestic activists.

The Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women could be considered the voice of what international feminism is, and what international feminism values. The convention is a statement of purpose, what the activists at the time felt was a list of the most important issues in feminism.

CEDAW's power is not a direct coercive power, instead a soft power of defining the issue agenda, telling us what parts of women's rights are most worth talking about. The CEDAW committee will chastise a country for their failure to fulfill certain expectations, sometimes creating problems as they don't take context into account.¹² They do not actively force this agenda onto groups, but because they have defined the agenda, these are the issues deemed to be most important. When a state signs CEDAW they may frequently do so with reservations, noting which parts of the treaty are not applicable to them, which can cause some skepticism. India reserved interference on marriages, as they believe that is personal and should not be managed by the state, which may be part of the reason India has never been a part of the CEDAW committee.¹³

¹¹ Vera Mackie. "The Language of Globalization, Transnationality, and Feminism," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 2001: 195.

¹² Sally Engle Merry. *Human Rights and Gender Violence*, Chicago, Chicago Press, 2006:104.

¹³ Engle Merry: 105.

What kind of issues does this voice of international feminism focus on?

Carpenter noted that issues involving children are frequently noted as paramount, children are viewed as unable to protect themselves and therefore in need of additional aid. Bodily harm are also issues that are considered exceptional, which may come from an original anti-slavery basis of human rights.¹⁴ Equality of access is important for social and legal rights, eliminating barriers, but there is less mention of eliminating social barriers. There may not be legal discrimination, but feminized jobs can still be devalued, and women can still be less encouraged to go for certain fields.¹⁵

These actors of international feminism influence each other to work in certain directions, while the civil society of domestic actors influences those organizations. The state in which domestic organizations work is an invariable part of their efforts.¹⁶ DNGOs must work with one another and also within any state regulations. Because of the influences of colonialism, there are influences of the global north's views on many issues embedded within states, including that of feminism.¹⁷

The state, treaty bodies such as CEDAW, international NGOs and domestic NGOs all work extensively on women's rights, each using somewhat different focuses and kinds of power to make themselves relevant and useful to the causes.

The Main Argument

International actors unduly restrict domestic activists' work. There many women's rights issues, and each context has different priorities on them. Unfortunately,

¹⁴ Keck and Sikkink: 76.

¹⁵ CEDAW

¹⁶ Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani. *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

¹⁷ Kaviraj and Khilnani, 4.

international aid only comes out for certain types of issues: such as violence against women, sometimes forcing domestic organizations into those issues. Domestic organizations seeking aid must either conform to international standards, or bypass the standard methods of acquiring aid. Domestic activists are remarkably successful in their navigation of international standards, but must devote a large amount of time and resources that could be better spent elsewhere. The alternatives are valuable, but are not sufficient for domestic activists as a whole. In order to successfully bypass gatekeeping or navigate it, an organization must already be successful, with enough access to resources that it can devote the time to the international arena, and enough knowledge of the system to work it to their own advantage. Since these qualities are not found in every organization, the alternative of bypassing or successfully using gatekeeping to an organization's advantage is not a sufficient remedy to the problem of gatekeeping.

Outline

I will examine the challenges of reconciling domestic and international feminism by looking at their interactions. Gatekeeping, or the process of selecting which domestic organizations will be brought into the center ring is the primary way the conflict is exemplified. Which activists will be brought in for conferences, which will be selected for inclusion on committees, and which causes will be made into massive media campaigns are all decisions that INGOs must make when working with domestic organizations. In chapter two, the process of gatekeeping will be examined, its implementations, weaknesses, forms, and effectiveness, and how organizations can avoid it. In chapters three and four I will use two case studies to show these processes in

action, discussing activists within India and Nigeria and their struggle to achieve international recognition.

India and Nigeria are two states with large feminist movements where much research has been done. Among the primary languages in each state is English, allowing me to access much of the work in the areas. Both states have different cultural traditions and different issues with international feminism. India's quick industrialization has led to rapid changes in culture, some pushing toward feminist goals and others against. Nigeria's population being roughly half Muslim creates interesting dynamics with commonly accepted Muslim laws. These two cases display the interactions between domestic and international activism. The cases also present some challenges to many of the globally north organizations that dominate international women's rights activism. The majority of people in both countries are not white, there are smaller middle classes, and domestic activists are concentrating on different issues. All of these differences make these cases ideal for examining where discrepancies exist and how harmful they are.

CHAPTER 2: INTERNATIONAL GATEKEEPING, DOMESTIC BYPASSING

International nongovernmental organizations, other international organizations, and domestic nongovernmental organizations (DNGOs) have a complicated relationship. The DNGOs frequently rely on the INGOs for support—monetarily and politically. The INGOs rely on the DNGOs to be doing the fieldwork. This hypothetically symbiotic relationship seems effective in concept. Both parties are getting benefits out of the partnership; however this is not always the case.

There are many more DNGOs than could easily be supported by the INGOs. There are too many issues and too many countries for every local cause to receive the money and political sway of the relatively small number of international human rights organizations. This means that INGOs have to make decisions about which organizations the INGO should support, in a practice commonly called "gatekeeping." Gatekeeping is controlling and limiting access, in this case to the international community and international support. INGOs have to make decisions about which organizations will do the best given their aid, and which organizations will draw donors to the INGO, therefore choosing which ones to allow access to the international arena. Supporting a DNGO or cause that turns out to be corrupt or even merely ineffective means that a different organization that might have done better has been denied.

Gatekeeping is necessary for the INGOs, as not every local NGO is worth funding. But it is also subject to error, biases, and a variety of other problems. How INGOs go about gatekeeping, and what things they take into account, will begin to explain where current gatekeeping falls short. Gatekeeping may prove successful for the

organizations that get promoted on the international level, being effective in this way, but there are still negative repercussions, as many other deserving organizations may not be selected, and the organizations which are selected may adjust themselves for the international arena. While the gatekeeping succeeds in the goals it put forth, it does not promote women's rights activism as well as it could.

However, gatekeeping is not the only way for domestic activists to receive support. These bypassing mechanisms—such as using the internet and creating a different advocacy network—may take extra time and effort, but they can be very successful.

Who is Involved in Gatekeeping?

Gatekeeping is practiced by a variety of actors and institutions. The model of gatekeeping that was previously defined assumes only NGOs are doing the gatekeeping, with an international community of NGOs working together on their chosen issues. However, this is a limited scope for gatekeeping. There are other actors which decide what organizations and issues take the forefront, sometimes by the very nature of their existence. Human rights treaties, for instance, have to select what gets put in the treaty, which violations can pass through the United Nations and which ones are too egregious to leave out.

Carpenter adds more about who can gatekeep, including think tanks, international organizations, governments, and others.¹⁸ Each contributes to the understanding of which domestic organizations get international support. The variety of actors means that there

¹⁸ Charlie Carpenter. "Studying Issue (Non)-Adoption in Transnational Advocacy Networks," *International Organization* 61, 2007: 648.

are a lot of expectations that a DNGO can go about fulfilling. They would not be able to please everyone, which should allow for all types of organizations to get support.

Because there are so many actors who go about gatekeeping, if one actor does not allow a DNGO through to the international stage, it would seem that it should be possible to find another, as there a variety of interests and missions between all of these gatekeeping actors.

In practice the diversification is not found, as some issue areas and organizations are represented over and over again on the international stage, and others never really making it, despite their similarities. One example of this is that of the children of wartime rape¹⁹ is not an issue area that many people work on. There are domestic organizations that seek to help these children, but the international community has not reached out for this. The INGOs continue to concentrate on child soldiers and sexual violence during wars. Both of these problems are important and should be addressed, but the two problems fail to take the whole picture into account, as when the war is over there are children who are born to mothers who don't want them, whose villages stigmatize their birth and refuse to believe that the mother was raped.²⁰ Despite fitting the criteria Carpenter sets out, these children are not a high priority issue.

What does Gatekeeping Look Like?

Gatekeeping works in a variety of ways. Organizations and other actors create norms, encouraging smaller organizations to conform to them to allow them to receive support. They create an international community of these organizations, so those who

¹⁹ Carpenter, 2007: 646.

²⁰ Laura Sjoberg, *Gendering Global Conflict*, New York, Columbia University, 2013: 259.

make it through the gatekeeping process have easy access to aid. INGOs reframe and brand the DNGOs in such a way that they become marketable to donors and international organizations. DNGOs have to match INGO expectations. Through all of these mechanisms, international organizations get to choose which domestic organizations receive funding, support, and aid. Various kinds of actors find certain methods easier than others, but the end result of gatekeeping is monolithic.

Religious NGOs, for example, may be seen as less marketable, particularly non-Christian NGOs. Many American INGOs have a Christian affiliation such as the Red Cross, World Vision, and others. Many of the places where these organizations work are not predominantly Christian, but still have a large number of Christian organizations.²¹ Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist organizations may not be funded by these large INGOs because of their religious differences.

It is difficult to find this religious bias explicitly, although there are activists who call out their lack of inclusion as because of religious differences (see ch. 3.) Instead it can be found subtly, with Christian or non-religious organizations being better funded even in areas where Christians are in the vast minority. Whether the divide is intentional or not is less important than the impact that this religious divide may have. If it is preventing non-Christian organizations from being effective, then this is a problem, if only non-religious or western organizations can get funding and aid. Even if there is simply a higher barrier to entry for Muslim or Hindu organizations, this might negatively affect activists in countries like Nigeria and India.

²¹ See table 1.1 and 1.2

Because of the cases selected, religion appears to be one of the paramount factors of gatekeeping. Both case countries have a large percentage of English speakers, which could be another barrier for international feminism, both are recognized by the UN, and have been relevant political and economic players over the past 20 years for their regions. These are other things that could have pushed INGOs away from them, but does mean that there is more literature available on the cases, so religion will be one of the primary gatekeeping factors.

Norms

Norm creation is referenced in most gatekeeping literature. The combination of treaties, expectations, and organizations leads to certain expected behaviors on the part of the DNGOs and states involved. There are norms against child soldiers, genocide, wartime rape, and a multitude of other atrocities. People still violate these norms, but there is general support of them. They have a certain cache in the popular consciousness, so organizations who are trying to combat these things might have an easier time getting support.

A variety of factors allow a campaign to be successful, and when these factors coincide a campaign can become vastly popular. Not every factor needs to be present, but the following example shows how they might interact, with norms at the forefront.

Kony 2012, a campaign in 2012 where an organization called Invisible Children released a video that spread across the internet detailing the crimes of a warlord named

Joseph Kony in Uganda, primarily his use of child soldiers.²² There was an initial clamor to stop his murders, rapes, and kidnappings—a flurry of donations was secured by Invisible Children, an organization that had no base or power within Uganda itself; instead they were only there to raise awareness of one warlord among many. After the buzz died down, Kony has still not been apprehended, and Ugandan specialist Barcia claimed it “took attention away from other warlords operating in the region who have been quick to take advantage of these new freedoms.”²³ The video used a norm that was already in place to great effect, people were immediately interested in the campaign and it brought a lot of awareness to the issue, but it also had its problems.

Why are there not trendy slogans and videos for every human rights violation then? If these techniques can be effective and you can avoid the problems of Kony 2012’s implicit assumption of Western dominance, this seems like a good way to raise awareness. Part of this answer comes down to norms. Organizations often do come up with interesting ways to frame their campaigns, but if the popular consciousness of the area they’re released in doesn’t care about the issue, it is less likely to be picked up. In this case, there is a strong cultural belief that people should not let children suffer and that child soldiers are a great evil.

But how would new norms be created, if they are deeply ingrained and a well constructed campaign can’t immediately put them into the forefront of people’s minds? NGOs and other actors can create new norms in a variety of ways. Long term social

²² Polly Curtis and Tim McCarthy. "Kony 2012: What’s the Real Story?" *The Guardian*. March 8th 2012. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/reality-check-with-polly-curtis/2012/mar/08/kony-2012-what-s-the-story>

²³ Manuel Barcia. "Whatever Happened to Kony 2012?" *Al Jazeera*. Jan 18th 2013. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/01/201311510541807406.html>

change and consistent campaigning is a part of the way. Women's and civil rights campaigns in the United States provide some historical examples of this. While these issues are far from over, they used protests, posters, and legal presence to push away some of the negative assumptions. Another piece is attaching new norms to already existing old ones. Richard Price notes that among the reasons there is such a strong international dislike of chemical weapons is because this was originally attached to poison, something which there is an older taboo for.²⁴ By attaching a new issue to an older one, they can give this new issue legitimacy.

But while norm creation impacts the general public's gatekeeping, it also must impact INGO's choices on which organizations to support. This is twofold. Firstly, INGOs are required to have public support in many cases, as they rely on donors and volunteers to make their organizations effective. Secondly DNGOs are expected to fulfill the norms. They are supposed to be tools that will help domestic organizations if the INGO spreads them far enough.

Zwingel argues that there are universal norms that are passed down and these are reinterpreted to create what appears to be a relative morality. This diversification of norms would allow for local organizations to use what they needed out of international norms but Zwingel admits that this top down approach is not always as free flowing as it should be.²⁵ Hypothetically there is an ebb and flow between local organizations and international ones; the international community would create a standard which domestic

²⁴ Richard Price. "A Genealogy of the Chemical Weapons Taboo," *International Organization* 49 (1995): 80.

²⁵ Susanne Zwingel. "How Do Norms Travel? Theorizing International Women's Rights in Transnational Perspective," *International Studies Quarterly*, 2011: 119.

NGOs could use to their advantage, taking what is useful for their context and leaving out what is not.²⁶ Then the INGO would see what was being used in their standard (or norm) and modify it as needed.

Reframing and Branding

INGOs also take domestic NGOs and help them by rebranding them for a more international audience. They reframe issues in such a way that donors and international actors might find them more acceptable, hopefully allowing for the NGO to get more support, accomplishing their goals.

Clifford Bob notes that while many think there is a “global meritocracy of suffering”²⁷ where whatever human rights cause is the most dire receives the most attention, this is not the case. He uses the example of Tibet, a cause that has inspired in international consciousness and points out other similar cases which have failed to do so. Within categories (environmental, state occupation) some issues are picked up and others are ignored. Other categories are completely ignored, as they have not found their way into the public.

Bob’s explanation is that “marketing trumps justice.”²⁸ It is a competition between groups as to who can garner the most attention and aid to their cause, therefore getting international support. This is done by playing to NGOs and other gatekeepers. Groups “simplify and universalize their claims, making them relevant to the broader

²⁶ Zwingel: 117.

²⁷ Clifford Bob. "Merchants of Morality," *Foreign Policy*, 2002: 36.

²⁸ Bob: 37

missions and interests of key global players.”²⁹ They rebrand themselves, reframing themselves, to become more appealing to international organizations.

Gatekeeping might not be intentional on the part of the organizations that are selecting which DNGOs and causes to support. DNGOs that are looking for international support are doing this themselves to make themselves more marketable, and hopefully drawing in the money and other resources of an international community. Rather than the issues being diverse and deeply entrenched in the culture from which they come, these causes become uprooted and someone disconnected from their roots. Any organization looking for support from international human rights organizations starts to look the same, no matter what their context is or how varied their issue is, creating a line of uniform human rights causes.

Why do Organizations Practice Gatekeeping?

Organizations must have a reason for gatekeeping as they do, as it is not fully effective. While researching this area I found that business journals’ discussions of how organizations such as businesses and non-profits make choices were helpful in explaining the choices of international NGOs, as in many ways they operate like businesses, trying to sell their human rights causes. Cohen, March, and Olsen discuss how organizations, both large and small go about making decisions, and how that decision making is more complex than it is for individual actors. Organizations have “problematic preferences” “unclear technology” and “fluid participation.”³⁰ These three things mean that their decisions are anarchical and difficult to understand. To deal with this, the authors come

²⁹ Bob: 40

³⁰ Michael d Cohen, James G March and Johan P Olsen. "A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice," *Administrative Sciences Quarterly* 17, 1972: 1.

up with a “garbage can” model, in which “one can view a choice opportunity as a garbage can into which various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped by participants as they are generated.”³¹

In the case of INGOs, the first and third factors are of primary importance. Their preferences are inherently politicized and their goals are unclear, difficult to define. Their membership varies, with people supporting and not supporting INGOs with ease. This means that they cannot just take a vote on what the majority of their body wants them to do, the body fluctuates too easily. They have large memberships, and there are many problems with each decision that they make. INGOS deal with large, complex, issues constantly, so their ‘garbage can’ has a lot in it, which means that their decisions are difficult to understand and might not make sense. “It is clear that the garbage can process does not resolve problems well. But it does enable choices to be made and problems resolved.”³² This anarchical and frequently illogical method of decision making is necessary because otherwise the process would be too long and convoluted for an organization to make decisions at all.

While INGOs may not be acting exactly like big businesses, they are still somewhat self-interested. This is not to say that these INGOs are not interested in helping people, instead they are interested in helping people in the way that they see as best, which is far from unreasonable. Bob somewhat cynically notes that when organizations conflict in an issue area organizations are fighting to eliminate each other,

³¹ Cohen, March, and Olsen: 5.

³² Cohen, March, and Olsen: 16.

neutralizing opposing views.³³ The happy model of international cooperation assumes that there is no competition between ideologies or over resources. There are some organizations that can work together, but if there is only enough funding from the international community for one organization to survive, everyone wants to be that organization.

Another model for why actors choose to gatekeep is constructivism.

Constructivism is the theory that our realities are the combinations of our experiences, histories, and social factors. This is opposed to an inherent or ‘real’ way that the world works, such as states being the most and only truly important actors in politics. While international organizations do not have the obvious power of states, they have social power in the forms of pressures they can exert. The world that has been set up via the social construction of human rights campaigns means that organizations have to select campaigns that fulfill those expectations. A campaign that does not fit the socially constructed norm will fall behind because it will not attract the attention that it needs. People expect human rights issues to look certain ways, and a campaign that does not fulfill those expectations would probably be less successful. Transnational Civil Society, which most INGOs are a part of, “[seeks] to change not just the interests and identities (and thus practices) of actors but also the environments within which these actors operate—that is, the structures of power and meaning.”³⁴ It is through the construction of realities that INGOs and other actors attempt to work, creating a new understanding of

³³ Clifford Bob, *The Global Right Wing and the Clash of World Politics*; Cambridge, Cambridge, 2012: 16.

³⁴ Price, 2003: 583.

the world and the careful selection of what messages to put forth allows for that restructuring of power.

The people involved in selecting which campaigns get international support may not even be aware that they are choosing only certain types of campaigns. The issues that fulfill the expected norms would just look more like good human rights campaigns. The others would be bad or not viable.

Zwingel describes a constructivist angle in her discussion of how norms travel “CEDAW may have international and domestic impact because it is a concrete part of a broader normative framework [...]”³⁵ The treaty for the elimination of discrimination against women is a solidified and noticeable culmination of many norms and expectations. Things that fall outside of the scope of CEDAW might not be noticed. A state that is violating CEDAW can be put upon, told that they are violating a treaty they have signed. If the violation is not contained within the treaty then it might be less reviled and perhaps even accepted by other states.

Finally, there are claims that organizations practice gatekeeping in these ways merely to maximize their own interests. DNGOs are not the only actors competing for attention and support. INGOs, treaty bodies, and many other actors are also looking for support from states, donors, and international organizations. When selecting what causes to support, these actors must make sure that these causes will help them as well. This is not to say that gatekeeping actors do not want to help with causes that they support. They want to help causes, but when selecting which cause to support they are making choices based upon what will help them.

³⁵ Zwingel: 117.

What is a cause that might help an INGO or other actor? Causes that have definite goals and success plans are helpful. Solid goals allow the organization to look like they accomplished something. More nebulous goals make it harder to define success, and therefore people supporting the organization cannot be as sure of the rewards. Saving children in third world countries is an example of something that can be measured and has definite rewards. 'Every dollar donated feeds a child for a day. Thus far we have fed 1 million children.' These claims allow donors to get a concrete response for what it is that they are doing. 'Stop the war in Darfur' is a less concrete claim. Until there is no violence there, it is unclear where the money is going.

For both of the last two issues, the discussion must turn to donors. What motivates donors to make the choices that they do? Donors want to have control over where their money goes, or at least the ability to control it. When charities introduce gift restrictions, or the ability for a donor to select where the money they donate will go, donations increase, even for those who do not select an issue area or part of the world.³⁶ Donors want some form of accountability from the organization they are giving to. In order to retain donors, an organization is better off keeping the donors informed of their successes, being polite, and making it seem as if the individuals' donations are important, so each individual feels appreciated.³⁷ However, even if donors are satisfied, "between 65% and 85% of defecting customers fail to repurchase a company's product despite

³⁶ Sara Helms, Brian Scott, Jeremy Thornton. "New Experimental Evidence on Charitable Gift Restrictions and Donor Behaviour," *Applied Economics Letters*, Washington College, 2013: 1521-1526.

³⁷ Roger Bennett. "Regret and Satisfaction as Determinants of Lapsed Donor Recommencement Decisions," *Journal of NonProfit and Private Sector Marketing*, Taylor and Francis Grp, 2009: 350.

being satisfied with both the brand and the organization.³⁸ Donor retention is a precarious thing, even when doing everything an organization can to ensure its donors remain loyal, donors will still drop.

Organizations need consistent donors, loyal donors, rather than those that make occasional donations, as donors who switch between organizations rather than being loyal to one or a few contribute less than the more consistent donors, even across all organizations.³⁹ So why do donors give? Most are driven by “some combination of altruism, egoism, accountability, and guilt.”⁴⁰ With these and the trust of the organization, donors choose to give. In the case of Prendergrast and Maggie, who were studying this in the context of child sponsorship, people decided to give because they wanted to establish “an interactive relationship”⁴¹ with the people that they were helping. The desire is to be involved and feel like they are doing something good, an understandable desire.

There is a difference here between people’s motivations and that of states who provide foreign aid to both countries and organizations within them. There are three theories on why states donate foreign aid to developing countries. They expect political support (such as during the Cold War when both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were attempting to get political support from third world countries by providing them money and other support. They are attempting to get favorable trade agreements, allowing donor

³⁸ Helms, Scott, Thornton: 351.

³⁹ Norm O’Reilly, Steven Ayer, Ann Pegoraro, Bridget Leonard, Sharyn Rundle-Thiele. "Toward an Understanding of Donor Loyalty, Demographics, Personality, Persuasion, and Revenue," *Journal of NonProfit and Private Sector Marketing*, Taylor and Francis Grp, 2012: 67.

⁴⁰ Gerard P Prendergrast, Chan Hak Wai Maggie. "Donor’s Experience of Sustained Charitable Giving, a Phenomenological Study," *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Emerald Group Publishing, 2013: 131.

⁴¹ Prendergrast, Maggie: 135.

states to further their economic interests. The final option is that donor states want to help those in developing countries to have a better standard of living.⁴² It is unlikely that it is one of these things, but a mix of the three or some subset of two explains the patterns of foreign aid. The United States used to donate disproportionately to India, but later changed to Egypt and Israel receiving the most, shortly after they became integral allies to creating peace in the Middle East.⁴³ When the Iraq War began, the focus changed again, and Iraq became the primary receiver of U.S. Foreign Aid.

Some organizations have direct interactions with donors, such as Invisible Children; with donate buttons on their website and guidelines as to what their money is going to. These organizations are supported by many small donations. Other organizations appeal to businesses and elites for fewer large donations. These differences may impact how organizations must go about maintaining donors.

The ways in which recipient intermediary organizations must attempt to keep their individual donors and their receipts of foreign aid are complicated, and force them to make selections about support in order to appeal more to donors. This might mean gatekeeping a DNGO in order to continue to receive more support, as the DNGO's goals are not clear enough to allow for subsections of pamphlets that tell donors what the DNGO accomplished that month. Because of the capriciousness of donors, intermediary organizations have to be very cautious.

⁴² Subhayu Bandyopadhyay, E Katrinna Vermann. "Donor Motives for Foreign Aid," Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis, 2013: 329.

⁴³ Bandyopadhyay, Vermann: 328.

Gatekeeping's Problems

There have been many cases of an international influence pushing for more equal rights and creating a backlash, possibly aggravating the problem. Sally Engle Merry points out the troubles with the 'top-down approach' in cases such as the campaigns against foot-binding and female genital cutting.⁴⁴ When there is no local push for a change in a human rights violation and a foreign group comes in to change it, they face a lot of resistance, and risk polarizing the people they are trying to help against them. She would recommend a slightly different approach, where the international influence may still occur, but they translate and reframe the issue, allowing for a domestic build-up to accumulate.⁴⁵ They provide a good starting point, but they miss a rather large part of the issue. It is certainly possible for the international community to point out an issue within an area, and attempt to work to fix it, but it is also relevant to allow the people within the area to note their own issues.

Of course, one must not say that a domestic human rights group is necessarily correct. There are certainly some organizations that are pushing for values that the international community may find problematic, and the international community is free to not support those causes. Instead, the goal would be for international human rights norms to flow both ways, rather than all coming from the international context to the local one.

Marion Uyl⁴⁶ discusses this problem of backlash in cases of dowry in particular. They categorize the current problems with dowry deaths as reactions to some

⁴⁴ Sally Engle Merry: 137.

⁴⁵ Engle Merry: 179-217.

⁴⁶ Marion Uyl. "Dowry in India Respected Tradition and Modern Monstrosity," *The Gender Question in Globalization: Changing Perspectives and Practices*. 2005.

international influences, specifically for the more universal acceptance of traditional marriage. When marriage became something everyone was doing, dowry came with it. They claim this led people to see marriage as an exchange of goods, a capitalist exercise, hence the problematic dowry deaths in recent years.

Erica Bornstein is an anthropologist who studied NGOs in Zimbabwe, focusing her work on World Vision's child sponsorship program.⁴⁷ In the program children in the most need are chosen and donors donate directly to the child, they can write back and forth and the donor gets pictures and updates. Unfortunately this sponsorship can create resentment between other people whose children are not sponsored, and parents of the sponsored children sometimes feel like their place is being usurped, as they cannot provide for their child. The child is still being helped, but there can be problems spread from it.

Both the adoption of issues and the non-adoption of issues can cause problems if not done carefully. Not picking issues means that they do not get the attention and thought that they deserve but picking an issue without considering repercussions can create backlash, as organizations do not always fully consider the context of the issue. They might be more concerned with donors or getting achievable goals, but this does not mean they have malicious intentions. Without these donors they would not be able to do anything, and there are areas that would be worse off were it not for international organizations.

From my research, there are some organizations who can successfully work without being gatekept. These are organizations who are able to be financially and

⁴⁷ Erica Bornstein *The Spirit of Development*, Stanford, Stanford University, 2005.

ideologically independent. Within the case studies there are many examples of successful organizations, ones who have navigated international aid in a way that has been beneficial. This is not an area that has been researched extensively in gatekeeping literature, the focus in most literature is on how gatekeeping is taking place and what is not being allowed through. The avoidance of gatekeeping is excellent for the organizations who are able to do so, who have the resources to work within the system or go around it entirely, but there are still many other organizations who cannot.

Bypassing Gatekeeping

The beginning of this project led me to expect a hopeless picture, where few DNGOs could successfully navigate international feminism. Instead, I have been pleasantly surprised, not by the ease of navigation but by the skill of the domestic organizations in finding alternatives and using the current situations to their own best advantage. It is still a difficult prospect for many organizations, and many success stories have to reframe their visions to better suit the norm, but there are far more success stories than initially anticipated.

Women's rights organizations have three ways to gain support for their projects in the larger world, which should hopefully help in the domestic contexts. They can use the international gatekeeping process to become a part of the transnational advocacy network. They can create their own advocacy network by working with other countries like themselves, frequently in the global south or other 'third world' areas. Finally they can bypass the middlemen and go to the internet, seeking funding and awareness through viral campaigns and crowd sourcing their funding operations. Each of these presents its

own challenges and rewards, and they are by no means mutually exclusive. It is through these three options that organizations have successfully gained support on an international scale, bypassing the ones that are not working for them. Still, this picture is not as rosy as it might seem, not every worthy organization can break through, and there are still biases.

The creation of a new, globally southern, advocacy network can be done in a few different ways. There are organizations that create partnerships, a loose coalition of organizations that allow them to know what their fellows are working on and potentially get support. There are also organizations that look like what can be seen on the international stage, ones which are trying to break through to be international feminists. Other organizations have been successful on the international scene, receiving support, then providing it to smaller organizations that cannot attain that kind of international success, effectively letting them act as an independent subsidiary organization.

Between these three types of interactions, international partnerships, global south based organizations, and domestic partnerships there can be an advocacy network beginning to rise, not unlike the one proposed by Keck and Sikkink.⁴⁸ There are ways in which it is different; the organizations are not necessarily pressuring governments, instead appealing to donors for funding. Still the organizations are working together, pressuring governments and utilizing other organizations for their strengths, shoring up weaknesses. This network is newer than the one of the global north, but it is gaining in power.

⁴⁸ Keck and Sikkink.

Adapting by creating a new network is more work than simply joining the old network, but this change allows the DNGOs to eliminate many of the problems associated with gatekeeping. If an issue has not been framed in such a way that the international organizations can support it, the domestic contexts might be more likely to. The network is closer to home, and it is more likely that donors and organization leaders would understand the context that the work is being placed in. There are less likely to be major cultural differences, and the fear of Western imperialism is reduced. Creating a new network is not perfect, it is time consuming and does not fully eliminate the problems of gatekeeping, as the global south is by no means a monolithic whole, but there are cases where it might alleviate some.

The newest frontier for DNGOs seeking support outside their domestic context is the Internet. Along with our ability to fund new games and movies, there are websites similar to kickstarter which allow people to fund charitable causes. There is also a rise in viral marketing, a change in awareness campaigns, and the ability to reach a broader audience. All of these new channels present opportunities for the DNGO looking to get international attention.

Indiegogo is a crowd funding website; people make small donations to specific projects, the person who created the project gets that money less a small fee. Indiegogo is specifically for charitable and artistic projects. An activist can post a description of their organization, what they would be using the money for, and how much money they would need to complete the project. One can sort by country, type of project, and which are closest to achieving their goal.

The website is entirely in English, meaning the donors a DNGO would reach are largely Western audiences. While the campaigns do not always yield results, there is a possibility of high reward for little risk, if you do not receive any funding there are no fees, and you can relist the project at another time.

Another newfound tool for activists seeking international support is that of viral marketing, spreading awareness like wildfire. This was present in the prior-mentioned Kony2012 campaign, an organization created a video about an issue and set out a very deliberate list of actions for those who saw the video to do. One should share the video with their friends, creating more awareness, and then get the “action kit” which contained posters, bracelets (one to give to a friend), and other awareness raising tools.⁴⁹ This marketing plan clearly worked, as the video quickly became viral, bringing wide awareness to the campaign, although it was followed by some substantial backlash.

Without the backlash, it is possible to see how a DNGO could create awareness about an issue that has not been accepted into the popular consciousness, without going through the gatekeeping process. It still might require the use of grafting or other techniques, but it also could bypass these. So far, this kind of campaign has not become massive unless it was for a Western group, such as Invisible Children. There are also barriers for entry to this kind of campaign; it requires resources to start the campaign and the tech-savvy to create the videos and marketing plan. It is unlikely that all organizations would be able to create the same kind of fervor around them that Kony2012 created.

Some organizations spring up entirely around the idea that creating awareness in people will help end human rights violations. Breakthrough, an organization that

⁴⁹ Kony 2012 Video

campaigns against gendered violence describes their tactics as creating "innovative, relevant multimedia and pop culture that bring human rights issues and values into the mainstream."⁵⁰ The Tactical Technology Collection is another organization that concentrates on sharing digital information, saying that they would like to strengthen activism by providing easily accessible evidence to help convince groups of the validity of causes.⁵¹

A similar campaign is that of the global petition, gaining signatures from other interested parties to show to a government or organization, ideally showing that outside actors care about this issue, shaming the group into acquiescing with an organization's demands. These petitions exist through Change.org and other similar websites.

The New Tactics of Human Rights, a workbook designed to help human rights workers with their work, addresses the petition. It can push an apathetic populace into action as they can see the direct results of their work. They also recommend recording people's experiences online to allow people who are interested to research the subject.⁵²

The audience of internet activists is larger than that which can be reached by going through organizations, but there are still limits on who can be reached via these types of campaigns. Americans make up 10.2% of Internet users. China and India make up 28.1%, but a far smaller percentage of their populations have internet access.⁵³ 20 countries make up almost 75% of the world's internet users. There are many people who

⁵⁰ "Mission," *Breakthrough*: <http://breakthrough.tv/about-us/mission/>.

⁵¹ "Tactical Technology Collective," *Tactical Technology Collective*: <https://www.tacticaltech.org/>.

⁵² New Tactics for Human Rights: A Resource for Practitioners, *The New Tactics in Human Rights Project*. 2004.

⁵³ "The Top 20 Countries with the Highest Number of Internet Users." *Internet World Stats*, 2012: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/top20.htm>.

internet marketing simply does not reach. While this is not a debilitating factor, it does present a restriction.

The digital marketing that can take place is valuable in concept, but there is little evidence of its effect in reality. Internet activism has been successful, but it lacks its success in globally southern countries. Even where there is awareness, such as the Arab Spring, there was little action. People were shocked, but did not send money or other support. Even in foreign policy the United States was “searching for relevancy.”⁵⁴ There was no reaction besides a public outcry, the events were shocking but did not incite action.

If there are changes in the future, more successful outcries, more effective campaigns, and more results, then viral marketing is a valuable tool for DNGOs seeking to reach out without going through third parties, instead interacting directly with their donors and other supporters. Until then, crowd sourcing and internet activism remain as tools, ones that might someday become invaluable to the causes.

To say that the new options present full alternatives to gatekeeping is foolhardy. There are still gatekeeping restrictions on DNGOs who are working in a different advocacy network, as organizations must still choose who to support and where to distribute any funding that may exist. The internet is gatekept by its massive influx of information as well as its barriers to entry. If every worthy cause were to create its own Indiegogo campaign, they would not all be funded. Some would be picked up by

⁵⁴ Pranger, Robert J. "The Arab Spring: America's Search for Relevancy." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 22, no. 4, Fall 2011: 20-35.

interested parties and spread, while others would remain thousands short of their goal, the days left for funding ticking down.

Conclusion

International support is not impossible for domestic feminists to find, but it is an arduous process that may require some adjustment of values. Many organizations have been successful at navigating the international framework, but have then critiqued it for being Western-centric. Others note INGOs expect global south feminists to be overly grateful for their inclusion despite their work and influence within their home country.⁵⁵

Gatekeeping is not always negative; it can be a healthy positive relationship for both parties involved. Unfortunately because gatekeeping places so much power in one side of the relationship, the international organization with the support and money to give away, it is restricting at best and suffocating at worst. While Muslim feminist organizations debate between international organizations backing them and the support of the people they are working with, “the concerns of Muslim women remain unacknowledged and unaddressed.”⁵⁶ When the system does work it can be very successful, but when it fails it creates tension and leaves the women who the organizations are trying to help out, with no help.

Still, many organizations have been successful in joining this international network. They have become partners with larger organizations and supported the smaller ones that cannot afford to play the international game.

⁵⁵ Deo.

⁵⁶ Adamu.

The funding of organizations such as the Ford Foundation sometimes goes to organizations based within the country. Of the money granted to sub-Saharan Africa in 2010 for human rights aid, two thirds of it went to domestic organizations.⁵⁷ However, almost seventy percent of the money for human rights grants went to American organizations, a fifth of this was then used toward foreign projects. This means approximately 14% of grant money for human rights work goes to American organizations who will then use it in other places. The grant-giving foundations are gatekeeping in favor of American organizations, even when granting money for international issues.

⁵⁷ "Advancing Human Rights: The State of Global Foundation Grantmaking," *The Foundation Center*: <http://foundationcenter.org/gainknowledge/research/pdf/humanrights2013.pdf>

CHAPTER 3: ISSUES IN INDIA

Indian women have struggled to exercise their rights, with social pressures against those who try, some of which were very well publicized in recent years. Bride burnings, rape, domestic violence, and many other problems are prevalent within the subcontinent. Some are on their way toward being improved, as government initiatives and non-governmental organizations work to change the minds of the populace- educating people about sex and consent, creating opportunities for women to work, along with other strategies, while others rights abuses are continually ignored, either in conjunction with the government or despite the government's efforts to eradicate this violence against women.

To explore gatekeeping and bypassing within India, I will note the women's rights issues in India, and who is concentrating on them. If there are international actors concerned, or domestic organizations. Which domestic actors are ignoring the international gatekeeping system, attempting to go beyond it, and which are working within that system? I will also note how India has been received within the community of international feminism as a whole.

Indian feminist organizations have many issues to balance: where to get the funding for their work, dealing with support from or against the state of India, as well as the women's issues they are actually working on. Many are navigating the world of international aid very well, using the gatekeeping structure to their own advantage, but unfortunately this means adjusting goals for the organizations, potentially changing issues. Other organizations are not as successful in gaining support. While it is possible

for these NGOs to get through the gatekeeping, not all are able to, and sometimes the cost of entry means concentrating on different issues than the ones the organization might have initially valued.

The International View

India signed CEDAW in 1980, ratifying it thirteen years later in 1993. In 2007 the CEDAW committee updated their report on India's women's rights. "There are significant improvements on various indicators"⁵⁸ according to their report, all though there are still many issues with discrimination against India. India has not seen a member of the CEDAW committee from their own country.

Some international organizations choose to aid the rights cause in India by creating their own presence there, such as the International Human Rights Association India, a divisional branch of the global NGO, International Human Rights Association. They believe that human rights are "interdependent, inalienable, and universal."⁵⁹

The Ford Foundation has a specific set of agendas for separate areas of the world. The Indian women's rights concern of the Ford Foundation is sexual and reproductive health.⁶⁰ They also have a global initiative, attempting to strengthen human rights worldwide, but there is no particular emphasis on women's rights, or against violence against women. This means that an organization seeking funding from the Ford Foundation in India must frame their work in the ideas of sexual health for women; the Foundation has selected an area of focus for Indian activists.

⁵⁸ "Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Report: India," *United Nations*, Oct 19, 2005.

⁵⁹ "About Us," *International Human Rights Association India*

⁶⁰ "India, Nepal and Sri Lanka," *Ford Foundation*

There is an attempt to create an advocacy network in India and other countries. One international organization from India is CREA, “one of the few international women’s rights organizations based in the global south.”⁶¹ They are attempting to push for women’s rights from the global south, opening up the international women’s rights community to include more non-western voices. They have several initiatives trying to increase female participation in politics and public education. While based in India, they cast a much wider net, working across their region.

The Indian government restricts its organizations, the DNGOs which it recognizes are restricted by its recognition. "Indian NGOs are reluctant to admit that the state determines both the scope and nature of the work that they can undertake."⁶² These restrictions occur because recognized organizations get benefits, but after independence, the Indian government fought to eliminate foreign interference. Regulation was put in place to make sure money was "used for purposes consistent with the sovereignty of the Indian republic, and in line with Indian law."⁶³

Kilby estimates there are between 1 and 2 million recognized NGOs working within India, and notes that this may be a part of the larger views of charity in India. Giving in India is structured, with reciprocal giving (zakat) and non-reciprocal giving (dan) or what Americans might describe as charity.⁶⁴ Dan is sometimes expected, and requested, while other times it is more freely given.

⁶¹ "About Us," CREA

⁶² Patrick Kilby. *NGOs in India: the Challenges of Women's Empowerment and Accountability*, Routledge, 2011, New York:4.

⁶³ Kilby, 15.

⁶⁴ Erica Bornstein. *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Dehli*, Stanford, 2012: 28.

Domestic Issues

One of the women's rights issues in India is 'dowry,' which is the payment by the bride's family to the family of the groom. In traditional times, this dowry would consist of things like animals (goods that would grow in value) and jewelry (items that would maintain their value.) As technology has evolved so to have dowries; now they consist of items like televisions, computers, and other goods that both break and decrease in value over time. It is worth noting that in both types of dowries, the brides are given clothing and jewelry of their own from their families which are theirs to keep. The jewelry allows women to leave the marriage in cases of emergency, although it is still frowned upon.

The problem with this decreasing dowry value is that some families feel that they are entitled to replacements of these dowry items. They demand higher and more valuable items even beyond the beginning of the marriage. Some families of the brides can afford to pay these, and may continue to do so. Others cannot or do not pay for these expanded dowries. Unfortunately sometimes their daughters pay the price.⁶⁵ There has been a phenomenon of bride burnings in India in which the wife is burnt, usually in the kitchen where it is classified as a 'kitchen accident' or something similar. The police often refuse to investigate these crimes, or do a poor job. Bride burnings have even been known to happen after the wife has born a baby boy, where they will also kill the child. The groom's family will then go on to have the groom marry another woman, usually in another area so that rumors do not spread, and then continue the process with the next bride.

⁶⁵ Linda Stone and Caroline James. "Dowry Bride Burning, and Female Power in India," *Gender in Cross Cultural Perspectives*, Pearson, July 2008.

The problem of dowry deaths came to the public attention in the 1990s, but it is on the rise. In 2010, there were 8391 dowry deaths, up about 140 from 2000.⁶⁶ Dowries are officially banned but they are generally still practiced in the Indian community.

There have been strong reactions to dowry deaths for obvious reasons, usually bypassing the international structure. Some families have begun to set up websites listing the names of perpetrators so that other families can avoid the same fate. Organizations have been lobbying to make the police investigate these crimes, setting up a network to watch out for these crimes and to ensure they are being prosecuted. They are also attempting to promote women's rights in the public's eyes with co-education that would allow the genders to interact on a regular basis, promoting understanding and making it more difficult for people to justify their assault on people of the opposite gender.

Another effect is that women have been waiting longer to get married and many have been more inclined to attempt to get a 'love match', although dowry deaths have still happened in non-arranged marriages. Women are entering the workforce and some are declining to get married at all. Combined with the large number of deaths per year, dowry deaths have decreased the number of women who get married, which may eventually lead to some population problems.

India has also struggled with rape and prosecution thereof, very publicly in the recent months. A woman was raped in New Delhi by six men while she was on a bus. She died about two weeks after the incident in a hospital in Singapore. Originally the men who had attacked her were not prosecuted quickly enough, which led to large scale protests in India and eventually across the world. There has been a drastic increase in

⁶⁶ Rahul Bedi. "Indian Dowry Deaths on the Rise," *The Telegraph*, 27, Feb 2012.

rape, especially in New Delhi in India recently, along with a rather poor record of prosecution.⁶⁷ This case was taken by women's rights activists and championed as an example of why something needed to be done.

The protests were met with some amount of derision; the President's son referred to the women protesting as "dented and painted."⁶⁸ He remarked that they were older women, not students protesting. The protesters accepted this moniker, using social media to note that they were dented and painted, but that did not impact their message. In fact, the reclamation of the term made it stronger. The protesters had been through the problems that they were protesting against, many had experienced violence against women in their lifetimes.

The protesters were attempting to strengthen the laws against rape, and decrease "political and bureaucratic apathy for crimes against women."⁶⁹ They desire to see long term institutional change in India. There are also organizations attempting to stop this, such as *Naari Adalat*. The response to the problems of rape prosecution in India is interesting. There are domestic organizations attempting to fight it, but a large amount of the protests are coming from Indians who live outside of the country, college-aged and young professionals working away from their home country. Sexual violence is an issue that is of the utmost concern for international feminism, and they have also shown a lot of support for organizations working within India.

⁶⁷ Adnan Abidi and Devidutta Tripathy. "Body of Gang Rape Victim Cremated in Dehli; Protests Continue," *Reuters*, Dec 30, 2012.

⁶⁸ Sabyasachi Dasgupta. "Delhi protests are by 'dented and painted' women: President Pranab's son," *NDTV*, Nov 27, 2012.

⁶⁹ Steve Robson. "I want to live," *Mail Online*, Dec 23, 2012.

There have also been attempts at bypassing the international to appeal directly to people interested. All India Bakchod, an activist comedy group, released a satirical video in September of 2013 entitled “It’s Your Fault” to point out the hypocrisy of the governmental and social response to sexual assault in India. It has since gotten over three million views.⁷⁰

In India 70% of women are victims of domestic violence.⁷¹ 56% of women thought that beating ones wife was acceptable in certain circumstances. These combined statistics lead to the endemic of people not reporting when they are being abused, and instead choosing to be silent. Many may think that they deserved it or that it is not wrong. Others may just be scared. There have been harsher laws put into place to condemn violence against women, but the crime is still underreported, as it is across the world. This may be, in part, due to the poor record on prosecution of domestic violence within India.⁷²

Many women’s rights organizations have risen up to combat this violence, and to encourage women to go to the authorities. These organizations are attempting to increase prosecution, provide safe spaces for victims, and encourage women to understand that they do have the right to safety in their own homes. Some organizations attempt to help the victims look into and possibly pursue the legal options while others avoid this, choosing to solve the dispute between the parties that are involved. International

⁷⁰ *It's Your Fault*. Film. All India Bakchod, 2013.

⁷¹ "India Tackles Domestic Violence," *BBC*, Oct 26, 2006.

⁷² V Elizabeth. "Patterns and Trends of Domestic Violence in India, an Examination of Court Records," *National Law School of India University*, 2000.

feminism would prefer legal pursuance of domestic abusers, getting them into the court systems and then into jails. However this solution is far less popular on the local level.

The Sahara Sangh are support groups that attempt to bring the woman, her husband, and their families in to discuss whatever problem they were having, be it beatings, rape, or another problem.⁷³ The abuser is not framed as a villain; instead the dispute is resolved as a discussion, an attempt to resolve a quarrel. “Of the 12 women who were included in the case studies in Saharanpur, all but two reported that they are living happily and there has been no recurrence of any form of violence after the [...] intervention.”⁷⁴ While this method may not be ideal in that the domestic abusers and not being punished for their actions, it appears that those who go through with the process are satisfied with its results.

Naari Adalat is a women’s court that “is successful because it builds on indigenous traditions and shames participants into solving disputes within the paradigm of the family.”⁷⁵ The judges are female and use the language of rights, but they are not as familiar with the global standards of feminism and human rights. They are strongly influenced by traditional families and caste. They operate entirely within the local sphere, and their funding is very small, almost entirely reliant on their connections in Vikalp—a larger Indian human rights organization.

⁷³ Elizabeth: 33

⁷⁴ Elizabeth: 40

⁷⁵ Rajaram and Zararia: 468

West Bengal, a state of India, uses shalishi to solve disputes within the village, including in cases of domestic violence.⁷⁶ Shalishi is a discussion process practiced within the community, where the dispute is resolved to each actor's satisfaction, previously used in dispute resolution between neighbors and in other similar cases. While domestic violence is illegal and could be pursued through a court, women are instead choosing this option, where "there is very little at stake."⁷⁷ 65.7% of women reported that they were "definitely better off" because of the process.⁷⁸ This process is not necessarily problematic in itself; it is the fact that it is being applied to cases of abuse that makes it less useful. It is also used in cases of land rights, where community sanctions for disobeying are harsher. It is difficult for women to prosecute their attackers when they are expected to go through this process which normally simply tells their husbands to not do it again. In recent years police reports on these crimes have gone up, but it is still estimated to be lower than the actual incidence.

There are also attacks of acid violence, where acid is thrown on a woman, permanently disfiguring her. About 61 cases have happened between the years of 1999 to 2007. The acid is easily available as it is used as a cleaning product, but the results can be devastating. The Indian government has given money to these women, but the organization fighting for them, the Campaign and Struggle Against Acid Attacks on Women (CSAAAW) notes that the money is enough for only two of them to receive

⁷⁶ Mahila Samakhya. "Innovative, women-initiated community level responses to domestic violence: a study of Nari Adalat, Baroda and Mahila Panch, Rajkot," *International Center for Research on Women* ICRW

⁷⁷ Samakhya: 15

⁷⁸ Elizabeth: 24

reconstructive surgery.⁷⁹ They have also attempted to bypass, by using crowdfunding campaigns to raise money for the survivors of acid attacks, on Indiegogo and similar sites.

Child marriages are also a common problem, with 40% of the world's child marriages happening in India.⁸⁰ It is illegal to marry someone below the age of 18 in India, but they are frequently performed despite this regulation. 47% of women between the ages of 19 and 24 were married before 18 in 2007. Since there does not appear to be a large grassroots push against these marriages, Amnesty International, UNICEF, and others speaking out against them are putting an issue in the spotlight that does not have large domestic support.

There are also other violations of women's rights in India, such as infanticide and sex-selective abortions. These problems have led to more boys being born than girls; the disparity varies by which province one looks at. The current numbers are about 100 girls for every 112 boys⁸¹ being born, but the spread is more even when the entire population is taken into account. This is an issue that the international community is very concerned about, as child marriages are near to the many organization's hearts.

Even more common are the disparities of women's wages in the workforce. 31.2% of women are in the workforce, and they make about 62% of what men make for equal work.⁸² Women are becoming more prevalent the workforce, but have still not caught up to the percentage of men, and they have more trouble receiving an equivalent wage.

⁷⁹ Scott Carney. "Acid Attacks on Women in India Prompt Protests," *NPR*, Aug 22, 2007.

⁸⁰ "Child Protection, Table 9," *UNICEF*.

⁸¹ "Catalyst Quick Take: Women in the Labour Force in India," *Catalyst*, New York, 2012

⁸² Catalyst

There are programs to help women start their own businesses and educational programs, attempting to allow women into the workforce more easily.

There are other organizations that are less concentrated on a single issue, instead working more generally with women's rights. Two of these organizations, Sahiyar and Vikalp have different approaches to the international problem. Sahiyar has been working mostly domestically, while Vikalp has been finding international support.

Sahiyar is an organization that offers skill training, education and other projects for women. The leaders “are ideological insiders, deeply rooted in Gujarati culture and social networks.”⁸³ They operate independently, not affiliated with a political party or another larger organization. They concentrate on many issues, but the majority of their clients come from domestic violence cases. The annual budget is normally below \$15,000. They frame issues with clients not as human rights problems, but as moral issues.⁸⁴ They do attempt to use human rights language when attempting to get international donations, but their work in the community is not branded in the same way. I was unable to find an organizational website, which is unsurprising given that according to the 2011 census only 3.1% of households in Gujarat have internet access.⁸⁵

Vikalp is a more international organization, which is pushing issues of sexuality and gender. The leaders are higher castes than those that they work with and they are “cultural and ideological outsiders.”⁸⁶ Their annual budget is over \$80,000. They have strong international links, but “weaker local ones. It is an organization with international

⁸³ N Rajaram and Vaishali Zararia. "Translating Women's Rights in a Globalizing World," *The Global Networks*, 2009: 566

⁸⁴ Rajaram and Zararia: 470

⁸⁵ Robin Biswas. *Updateox.com*, <http://updateox.com/india/state-wise-internet-users-in-india-census-2011/>

⁸⁶ Rajaram and Zararia: 468

funding and a transnationally connected leadership” and it “tackles issues that are less familiar to Indian feminists” such as the subject of lesbianism. Their website shows them as partnered with The Advocacy Project, and their website is in English.⁸⁷ Their list of projects includes research, a lesbian support group, training, a helpline, an occupational health center, and environmental interventions.

Vikalp has a donate button on their website, and have released a series of videos on YouTube, discussing issues they are working on. They fund the much smaller *Naari Adalat*, an organization which has not found aid on the international scale in the same way, creating a network of advocacy which allows larger organizations who have benefitted from gatekeeping to avoid their pitfalls. Vikalp is a current partner of Hivos, which is a Dutch network with bases all around the world.⁸⁸ Hivos has over 700 partner organizations. Vikalp has received grants from the Fund for Global Human Rights⁸⁹ and Global Giving⁹⁰ for 16 and 76 thousand.

For general bypassing, India’s section on Indiegogo had 52 projects on March 6th, such as school supplies for children and aid for acid attack survivors. Many of these were at least partially funded.⁹¹ Some were from international groups, while others were from Indian actors.

Funding is the most tangible form of support an organization can receive, and therefore is the easiest to measure for the purposes of international actors supporting

⁸⁷ Vikalp, vikalpwomensgroup.org

⁸⁸ Our Network. *HIVOS*: <http://india.hivos.org/our-network>.

⁸⁹ Current Grant List. The Fund for *Global Human Rights*: <http://globalhumanrights.org/en/country-programs/south-asia/india/current-grants-list>.

⁹⁰ Vikalp Women's Group. A Proposal for Livelihood, *Global Giving*: <http://www.globalgiving.org/pfil/1887/projdoc.pdf>.

⁹¹ Indiegogo.

DNGOs. The foreign aid given to Indian organizations has skyrocketed since 1984, going from 58 million dollars to 1.4 billion in 2005.⁹² However, even with the vast amounts of money, not every organization is getting funded. The number of organizations has also more than quintupled. In 2001-2002, the top 25 organizations accounted for 22.52% of the funding, out of over 15,000 organizations.⁹³ 74% of the funding came from 5 countries; the U.S., Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, and the Netherlands. The funding is coming in from a few western countries and going toward a very small number of organizations.

This funding problem can be seen in the two larger organizations selected by Rajaram and Zararia. Their budgets vastly differ, fifteen thousand a year to almost eighty two thousand.⁹⁴ What is the difference between Sahiyar and Vikalp that creates this massive funding difference? Rajaram and Zararia suggest it is a matter of presentation. Sahiyar is an organization “deeply embedded in Gujarati culture⁹⁵.” Its leaders and members were born or live in the area that they work, and they are embedded in the cultural practices of that area. Vikalp is located in Baroda “by coincidence.” They are not attached to the area in which they work, and are funded from international sources. Their book was published in English, not the dominant language in the region they are based in. This suggests funding goes to the organizations more accessible by international feminists, and with existing international feminist thinking, not those connected to the area that they are working in.

⁹² Rita Jalali. "International Funding of NGOs in India: Bringing the State Back In." *Voluntas: International Journal Of Voluntary & Nonprofit Organizations* 19, no. 2, June 2008: 170

⁹³ Jalali: 171

⁹⁴ Rajaram and Zararia, 472

⁹⁵ Rajaram and Zararia, 471

Of the twenty five organizations to receive the most funding in 2002, twelve were Christian affiliated, despite less than 3% of the population being Christian at that time.⁹⁶ All of the twenty-five are local chapters of international organizations. These organizations are already insiders to the international scene, and are continuing to receive money for that. In more recent years there are more Indian organizations on the list of most funded, with only 7 being Christian affiliated, (see table 2), but it is still mostly other countries organizations that are given money.

The Indian government publishes the organizations that contribute the most money during each fiscal year, which state of India they contribute to, and their region in the world. This information, presented for the years 2001 and 2009, show us how little money comes from organizations within India, and so just how reliant domestic NGOs are on international funding. In 2001, thirteen out of twenty five organizations were Christian, eighteen had foreign homes. In 2009, thirteen had foreign homes. Many of these organizations are distributing money to smaller organizations, while others are creating their own infrastructure, working directly with the people.

There are other measures of support. No one from India has ever been on the CEDAW committee,⁹⁷ indicating that the international community might be displeased with India's implementation of the treaty. India is regularly a member of the Security Council, so they are accepted by their peers and the international community as a whole, just perhaps not in regards to feminism. A fair number of INGOs, like the International Research Center for Women and the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the

⁹⁶ Census of India. "Religious Composition."

http://www.censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/India_at_glance/religion.aspx.

⁹⁷ CEDAW. "Members of the Committee ." <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/members.htm>.

Empowerment of Women have their regional offices for Asia in India, so there is a transnational advocacy interest in the country.

Organizations based in India are invited to some conferences of transnational advocacy, given some acceptance, but critics note that those given the opportunity to come to the conferences have strict codes of behavior put upon them. "The spectacle was one of bowing and scraping courtiers trying to make sure their patron knew how grateful they were."⁹⁸ It is not a celebration of cross cultural exchange, those who have made great strides in their work within India and other countries are not proud, but instead are expected to be grateful for being included.

Conclusion

Indian feminist organizations have to push against a set of cultural norms that limit feminist goals as well as a government that is frequently reluctant to take action. Many have adapted to use the international funding and support for their goals, some have bypassed the INGOs, and others have failed, either unable to find a way in or choosing to be more connected to their local base. There are differences in the focus of the two types of organizations, whether their focus is economic or social.

In feminism, there is a push and pull between economic and social injustices. Deo expects there would be a concentration of economic concentration in the Global south, but there is not. "The necessary conclusion one must draw is that the women's movement in India is shaped by these debates more than it shapes them."⁹⁹ The debates in question are over the issues which should be concentrated on, and how problems should

⁹⁸ Deo, Nandini, and Duncan McDuie-Ra. "Transnational Women's Advocacy & Indian Agendas." *Social Policy* 41, no. 2, Summer 2011: 41-47. *Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson)*, 41.

⁹⁹ Deo: 42.

be combated. While the Indian women's rights movement is among the more prominent of the global south, it is still pushed into accepting the stringencies of the global north for their support.

Obviously not all organizations fall in line with this dichotomy, and many domestic organizations are focusing on economic problems, but Deo expresses surprise at the numbers concentrating on social inequality. It is notable that Deo does not discuss violence against women, which it is reasonable to expect to see a lot of organizations concentrating on, and there are. Violence is a part of the international agenda that the domestic agenda is also very heavily focused on.

The DNGOs are not setting the agendas, but they are using the agendas of INGOs and other gatekeeping actors for their own needs. Many are navigating the international arena successfully, adjusting goals and language to suit international expectations, or avoiding those expectations and working beyond them. Those that are not may use the more successful organizations as intermediaries, becoming subsidiary and sister organizations to the larger ones. The INGOs with branches in India are still the most well funded, but there are ways for DNGOs to work their way there.

CHAPTER 4: NIGERIAN PROBLEMS

Nigeria has a unique situation with women's rights. The country is divided into the north and south, where the north is largely Muslim and poorer, while the south is mostly Christian and more wealthy. This socio-economic and religious divide means that there are different problems for women's rights in different parts of the country.

The common problems of women's rights in Nigeria will be outlined, and then the legal remedies that the government of Nigeria is attempting. Then I will discuss how gatekeeping takes place within Nigeria, and how organizations are getting through it.

In a similar way to India, NGOs in Nigeria have frequently found ways to successfully break into the gatekept system, either by adjusting their goals to fit international feminist agendas, or by creating their own feminist network for NGOs across Africa or for Muslim women's groups. In the traditional Western INGOs, these organizations have difficulty, but this new network the international aid is more accessible.

Women's Rights Issues

Nigeria has a number of human rights concerns, with Amnesty International noting the forced disappearances and communal violence prevalent in some parts of the state. More specific to women's rights, despite ongoing cases of sexual assault and rape, "the authorities consistently failed to prevent and address sexual violence, or to hold perpetrators to account."¹⁰⁰ Children's rights are also a concern as twelve out of thirty six states in Nigeria passed the Child Rights Act. Children are not given their own prisons,

¹⁰⁰ "Regional Report on Nigeria," *Amnesty International*, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/nigeria/report-2012>

and remand homes for children are underprovided, which is a concern of the international community, but one that is less shared by domestic activists. LGBT+ people are still discriminated against, with a fourteen year prison sentence approved for same sex marriages, something that international activists have brought a lot of attention to, but is not heavily criticized within Nigeria itself.

Nigeria has not submitted a report to CEDAW since the late 90's, despite the fact that the convention calls for them to submit a report every four years.¹⁰¹ In their last report, published in 1997, spousal rape was considered an exception to what qualified as rape.¹⁰² It is also noted that women do not report domestic violence for fear of familial reprisals and for lack of police intervention. No battered women's shelters existed. While prostitution was not against the law, police would still raid brothels and punish these women.¹⁰³ Workplace discrimination was determined to be unconscious, a side effect of women being expected to rear any children, not institutionalized. Though boys and girls were taught identical curriculums, boys were more likely to go to school and to be pushed toward 'masculine' pursuits, and in 1998, 27% of Nigerian college graduates were women.¹⁰⁴ From this report, Nigeria was trying to implement CEDAW where it could, but still has a number of problems with women's rights, and in some cases was not in compliance with the Convention, such as the lack of battered women's shelters.

Violence against women is certainly a concern of the domestic organizations within Nigeria, along with educating women and helping them to join the workforce.

¹⁰¹ "Nigerian CEDAW Report," *CEDAW* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reporting.htm>

¹⁰² "Nigerian CEDAW Report:" 23

¹⁰³ "Nigerian CEDAW Report:" 26

¹⁰⁴ "Nigerian CEDAW Report:" 33

These issues are brought up frequently on organizational websites as key issues of women's rights within the country.

The International View

In 2006 there was an election for a women's rights committee in the United Nations. Saudatu Mahdi, executive director of the Women Rights Advancement and Protection Agency and Nigerian representative, was denied a spot on this committee. One of the reasons cited was Nigeria's poor human rights record, though Mahdi was quite qualified in the area which they were studying. A representative of Ghana was elected to represent Western Africa instead.¹⁰⁵

Nigeria has had two members of CEDAW, one appointed January 1st of 2013, Nwankwo Theodora Oby was a magistrate who runs a free legal service for indigenous women¹⁰⁶ as well as Rose Ukeje, who was appointed in 1987.¹⁰⁷ Being on the committee is a prestigious position, and it shows an amount of international acceptance. If the international community feels that a country is not sufficiently addressing women's rights, it is unlikely they will see a seat on the CEDAW. These positions are rewards for good work, both for the person, and for their country. The NGO has attention brought to it, hopefully allowing it to expand its activities.

CEDAW has yet to be domesticated in Nigeria with an act of the National Assembly. The initial response to CEDAW was largely positive, at least by the federal

¹⁰⁵ "Nigeria: CEDAW Position Denied." *Pambazuka News*, July 19, 2006.
<http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/jobs/36031>

¹⁰⁶ Theodora Nwankwo, *CEDAW*.
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/CVMembers/TheodoraObyNwankwo.pdf>

¹⁰⁷ "Members," *CEDAW*. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/members.PDF>

government. A few years after Nigeria signed the treaty, in 1989, the Attorney General of the Federation stated:

in response to the widely-held view that there was need to correct the anomalies, imbalances, and prejudices in our laws relating to women and children... and to consider the issue of better protection for women and children under the law, with a view of making proposals for reform... because in our male-orientated society, women and children appear to suffer legal and social disabilities by the mere fact of their sex or status.¹⁰⁸

This statement was made at the first conference to adjust laws to support women's rights in Nigeria. This report also claims that in Nigeria, there was a strong preference for male children that continues to today, and that a woman's place is in the domestic environment. The report, written by the Nigerian Government claimed that contact with the west "gradually introduced Western Cultural values including religion and education to Nigeria. This association happily changed the face of things for the Nigerian woman."¹⁰⁹

In 1997 plans to fix problems of non-compliance with CEDAW were submitted. The Nigerian constitution does ban discrimination based on gender, and the ratification of CEDAW would help to enforce that.¹¹⁰ The problems with freedom of marriage are addressed; the report claims that the majority of the issues come from Nigeria's dual court system, when people choose to follow the Islamic laws of Nigeria women may be married before 18, as their parents can choose their brides. The same applies to the

¹⁰⁸ "Nigerian report on CEDAW." *United Nations*, 1997.

¹⁰⁹ 1997 CEDAW: Section 14.

¹¹⁰ 1997 CEDAW: Section 59

dissolution of marriage and inheritance rights.¹¹¹ It is noted that women are not prohibited from owning property under Islamic or national laws.

The federal government has called upon Nigerian citizens to show their support for the treaty so the assembly will pass laws enforcing it. In 2008 the government organized a workshop to implement CEDAW; it was attended by the First Lady, Hajia Turai Yar'Adua. She promised the quick passage of a bill enforcing the regulations, blaming the assembly for stalling on the issue. Senator Umaru Dahiru claimed that some attempts had been made to domesticate the bill, with the Child Rights Act, Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act, UBE Act and the National Policy on HIV and AIDS Act, all of which had been passed by the national assembly.¹¹²

There have been meetings since, attempting to domesticate the treaty, but they have not produced the desired results. The report that is supposed to be sent to the CEDAW committee every four years is not always sent, and the domestication has not been fully effective. Domestic newspapers have critiqued the Nigerian lawmakers' failure to accept the protocol:

Efforts by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs & Social Development and women groups to replicate [the protocols of CEDAW] is allegedly being frustrated by 'certain' Nigerians because of some of its content on women reproductive health, marriage age and gender equality. CEDAW has however

¹¹¹ 1997 CEDAW: Section 61

¹¹² Hajiya Bilkisu. "Nigeria: State Commissioners Discuss CEDAW." *All Africa*, September 11, 2008. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200809110459.html>.

been represented to the National Assembly in a manner that makes it more culturally sensitive.¹¹³

The minister for women's affairs, Josephine Anenih, organized an event called 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence in 2010 to push people to support the bill. In 2011 "a coalition of NGOs/civil society Organizations from the Niger Delta, under the auspices of Women Voice Network, (WOVON)" called for a bill to be passed enforcing CEDAW and affirmative action for women in politics.¹¹⁴

Amnesty International released a Nigerian human rights agenda in 2011, detailing plans for an improvement on Nigeria's record. AI says that "despite Nigeria's ratification of the [...] CEDAW without reservation more than 25 years ago in 1985, CEDAW has not yet been incorporated into national or state legislation and its provisions are not implemented at state level."¹¹⁵ Nor have they implemented the rights outlined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The report provides examples of rapes from both police officers and family members, with little protection for the victims. Violence against women is not criminalized and marital rape is not considered a crime. These violent acts do not appear to be the equality before the law that CEDAW tells states to provide. Amnesty International lists recommendations for the Nigerian National Assembly to fix the problems they cite with the current laws.

Child marriages are also a problem in Nigeria, and they are brought up by the Population Council, a nongovernmental organization concerned about marriage and

¹¹³ Damilola Oyedele. "Pass CEDAW Bill FG Urges Legislators, *This Day Live*, Dec 1 2010.

¹¹⁴ Taneh Beemene. "Women Urge Speedy Passage of CEDAW Bill" *The Tide*, Nov. 25, 2011.

¹¹⁵ Peter Beneson House. "Nigeria Human Rights Agenda 2011-2015," *Amnesty International*, Aug 2011.

sexual practices across the world. The Population Council says that in 2004 20% of girls were married by 15 and 40% by 18¹¹⁶ and that marriages before the age of adulthood are problematic for various reasons, including HIV, health risks of early pregnancies, and the lack of choice on the part of the girls. Child marriages were not specifically denounced in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but they do defy several of its precepts, and they are generally considered to be a violation of a child's rights. The CEDAW, on the other hand, does ban child marriages in signatory states. Girls are married before they turn 15 to men who are definitely adults, and the age gap can easily lead to continued discrimination against women in their adulthood.

CEDAW has yet to be domesticated. The federal government is blaming the national legislature and state governments for this, asking citizens to pressure their representatives to accept CEDAW in a national bill of some kind. International organizations and other states are not impressed by this claim, as they feel reports of violence and discrimination against women need to be addressed, and it has been 21 years since the ratification.

The Maputo Protocol has begun to be integrated into Nigerian law, the Yakurr area was working on passing a gender equality bill in 2011 which would enforce some of the treaty.¹¹⁷ In the middle of 2012, a bill was struck down by a federal high court, and they cited the Protocol and CEDAW as reasons for its unconstitutionality. The bill made female law enforcement officers ask for the permission of their Commissioner to marry, and the commissioner must approve their choice. A women's rights group, which

¹¹⁶ "Child Marriage Briefing: Nigeria," *Population Council*, Aug, 2004.

¹¹⁷ Bassey Ita. *Sensor News Online*, 2011.

brought the suit, "asked the court to expunge the said Regulation from the Police Act, as it was not justifiable in a democratic state such as Nigeria, which had domesticated the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW.”¹¹⁸

On the other hand, Canada's Immigration and Refugee board talks about the failure to implement equitable inheritance laws. The law gives a widow the right to the couple's property, but "this right of the widow will often be ignored, or challenged, by the family of her dead husband" (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.) This is directly contrary to the Maputo Protocol, which demands equitable inheritance practices. Still, the inheritance practices in Nigeria are consistent with some interpretations of Shari'a.

Observers inside Nigeria also note the lack of implementation. "All these listed Conventions, Charters and Protocols have the signatures of Nigeria's representatives mockingly adorning them. In practice however, their implementation have been a sham. The Conventions, Charters and Protocols have been quite detailed in touching issues of health, violence, education, marital freedom, sexual dignity, freedom of choices etc. The Conventions have remained "conventions", the Protocols have changed nothing and the

¹¹⁸ Innocent Anaba. "Court declares Police Act on female officers' marriage illegal," *Vanguard* May 7 2012.

Charters have charted no course for the true progress of women. The patriarchal prejudices and disorders still remain with us and embarrassingly so.”¹¹⁹

In Nigeria's most recent report to the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, they were critiqued for their failure to report some important issues. The commission, "in a statement on Monday, said Nigeria did not include its high maternal mortality rate, and 'what the Federal Government is doing to reduce the incidence of unsafe abortion in the country.'”¹²⁰ Although Nigeria has attempted to integrate the Maputo protocol, they are still having difficulties with unsafe abortions and mother mortality rates in particular. The Nigerian delegation to the Commission declined to comment on the issues with their failure to report on those statistics.

The Maputo Protocol has been partially domesticated. Eight years after the ratification, Nigeria has implemented some of the protocols. Though their affirmative action policy has not really taken effect, it is in place, and the first lady is actively campaigning for more women in government. They have passed equitable inheritance laws, their practice is questionable, but they are on the books. Activists are still critical, but there is some progress being made.

Gatekeeping in Nigerian Feminism

There is not the wealth of anthropological work on Nigerian women's rights organizations that appears within India, but it is still possible to discover what women's rights organizations are doing. Their organizational websites tell us partners and goals, and many of the grants they may receive are public.

¹¹⁹ Odumakin. *Nigerian Observer* Dec 12, 2009.
www.nigerianobservernews.com/24122009/features/index.html.

¹²⁰ Friday Olorok. "AU body rejects Nigeria's human rights report" *Punch*, Feb 14, 2012.

Baobab, a large Nigerian women's rights organization, which concentrates on "women's legal rights under the three systems of law—customary, statutory and religious in Nigeria."¹²¹ They use advocacy, outreach and education, and documentation to bring about change for women in Nigeria. They are partnered with several international organizations, such as Women Living Under Muslim Laws which has a headquarters in the UK, and the Women's Learning Partnership, an organization headed by women from Saudi Arabia and Iran, although based in the United States.

BAOBAB also becomes temporary partners with international actors, such as the MacArthur Foundation. In 2004 and 2007 they received \$400,000 and \$200,000 respectively from the organization, but have not gotten a grant from the MacArthur Foundation since.¹²² The Ford Foundation granted them thirty one thousand in 2010.¹²³

Women Living Under Muslim Laws seeks to reframe Muslim law to allow for greater women's rights. Though they are not Nigerian in origin, the organization is prominent there, saying that the way Muslim laws are currently practiced are not true to the spirit of the teachings of Islam.¹²⁴ The primary work of the organization in Nigeria is the attempt to stop violent punishments of women.

The double-edged sword that Muslim organizations in Nigeria live under¹²⁵ may be somewhat mitigated with support from WLUML. The organization does not claim that feminists cannot work under Islam, instead claiming that the myth of a unified Islam

¹²¹ *BAOBAB*, <http://www.baobabwomen.org/history.htm>

¹²² *BOBAB for Women's Human Rights. MacArthur Foundation:* <http://www.macfound.org/grantees/1026/>.

¹²³ *BOBAB. Ford Foundation, 2014:* <http://www.fordfoundation.org/grants/grantdetails?grantid=113317>.

¹²⁴ *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*, <http://www.wluml.org/>

¹²⁵ Adamu.

is problematic, and that there are interpretations of Muslim laws which are very feminist.¹²⁶ The organization is not strictly gatekept, with no membership policy for organizations wishing to join, merely noting which organizations are active in their policies and goals and which are not. While WLUMML currently has headquarters in the U.K., they were originally started by nine women from the global south, and still have their two major coordination offices in Africa and Asia.

The Women's Consortium of Nigeria is a 25 person organization that seeks to stop violence against women and children, promote education, and to work for women's economic rights. There is no explicit religious affiliation on their website, but they are based within Nigeria itself.¹²⁷ The United Nations considers them to have "special consultative status"¹²⁸ and recommended to the United Nations that the Nigerian government take more steps toward protecting women and girls. They have also been supported by the African Women's Development Fund¹²⁹ and the Global Fund for Women.¹³⁰

Gatekeeping in Nigeria has a specific colonial history, while in many cases it was not the English who were restricting Nigerian movements, it was English educated Nigerians. In the 1940's elite women in Nigeria were attempting to help others, specifically the lower class young girls who were marketplace hawkers in the city of Lagos. The use of elite power to better the lives of these poorer women might have been

¹²⁶ "About WLUMML." *Women Living Under Muslim Laws*: <http://www.wlumml.org/node/5408>

¹²⁷ *Women's Consortium of Nigeria*, <http://www.womenconsortiumofnigeria.org/>

¹²⁸ Oral Statement to the United Nations, *Women's Consortium of Nigeria*, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/general-discussions/ngos/wocon.pdf>

¹²⁹ 16 Days of Activism, *The African Women's Development Fund*, <http://www.awdf.org/the-process/16-days-of-activism/>

¹³⁰ Grants, *Global Fund for Women*, <https://grants.globalfundforwomen.org/GFWSearch/index.php?id=9133>

well intentioned, but such advocacy relies on “directly or indirectly divesting [the non-elite group] of the power to advocate for itself.”¹³¹ Rather than working with the girls they were trying to aid, these elite women decided to fight for them, saying that the young women should not be on the streets hawking, as it could lead to immoral behaviors such as prostitution. In retrospect, the girls hawking were contributing to their household income, allowed homemakers and those bedridden to not leave the house as the girl hawkers would go door to door to sell their goods, thus providing a service to the economy.¹³²

The Lagos Girl Hawkers project was an early example of an out of touch group attempting to intervene for a poorer group. Many of the elite women intervening in the hawkers were western educated, having studied in England, but were out of touch with what was necessary for the girls they were trying to help. This model carries over in international gatekeeping for women’s rights groups in Nigeria.

As a more recent example of gatekeeping within Nigerian feminism, in 2000, a young woman named Bariya Magazu was flogged for having sexual relations outside of marriage, which she originally claimed was rape. She rescinded this claim after there was not enough evidence, so she would not also be punished for perjury.¹³³ Various well-wishers from Canada saw this plight, and attempted to intervene, saving the girl from being unjustly punished for her assault. The pressure from Canada “may have pushed the

¹³¹ Abosede A George. Feminist Activism and Class Politics: the Example of the Lagos Girl Hawker Project, *Women's Studies Quarterly* 35 No. 34, University of New York: 2007 : 129

¹³² George: 144

¹³³ Rhoda E Howard-Hassman. "The Flogging of Bariya Magazu: Nigerian politics, Canadian pressures, and women's and children's rights," *Journal of Human Rights* 3 No. 1, Carfax Publishing, 2004: 1.

authorities of Zamfara to take more precipitate action than they might have taken”.¹³⁴

The flogging was not carried out in a way conducive with the laws of the state of Zamfara; there were no witnesses to the act of sex outside marriage, just as there were none to her claim of rape. The reporting in Canada referred to this as Shar'ia or Muslim Law in a derogatory way, this law was cruel and wrong. The heavy handed push by the Canadian human rights workers may have pushed the people toward a heavier punishment, their attempt to create change making the people dig into their own ways.

This entrenchment is not an uncommon problem for activists to face. Muslim feminists in Nigeria find themselves stuck, wanting to support change and more rights for women, but not wanting to abandon their religion, which many view as anti-woman. Muslim feminists have a double edged sword, where they may need the aid of Western organizations, changing “their areas of interest, to accommodate the donors’ interest, even if this means their work is less useful in responding to the pressing areas of need in the community.”¹³⁵ Fatima Adamu is a working Muslim activist in northern Nigeria, who has found that organizations resist funding her work and other organizations like hers because of their Muslim affiliation. In order to be relevant to the people they work with, however, maintaining that religion is important, as Islam is “a total way of life, and we aspire to conduct our lives according to its teachings.”¹³⁶ Islam is important to both the activists and many members of the community; the international reluctance to support these organizations substantially limits them.

¹³⁴ Howard-Hassman: 5.

¹³⁵ Fatima Adamu. "A Double-Edged Sword: Challenging Women's Oppression within Muslim Society in Northern Nigeria," *Gender and Development* 7 No. 1, Oxfam: 1999: 59.

¹³⁶ Adamu: 58.

This belief may come from some substantive misunderstandings of how Islam interacts with law in Nigeria. There are many levels of Islamic law, sometimes referred to monolithically as 'sharia'.¹³⁷ Quraishi critiques this usage of Islamic law, noting that what many refer to as sharia is complex, an interpretive common-law system rather than a civil law codex. This misunderstanding by many non-Islamic people may lead to the misapplication of international feminism's funds.

It is not an explicit refusal to help Muslim organizations or areas, but the focus shifts toward organizations with a religious common ground. While Nigeria does not publish the NGOs which contribute the most as India does, activists within Nigeria tell us that this is the case. The organizations with an explicit Muslim affiliation have more difficulty being accepted by the international community.

For Nigeria, there were seven projects listed on the sixth of March on Indiegogo, a play that talks about the repercussions of female genital cutting and the creation of a water hole in a community were two such.¹³⁸ None had received any funding. Most of these appeared to be posted by actors within Nigeria, working within their country to receive funding, although three were by international actors posting on behalf of issues within Nigeria. Change.org has many petitions for Nigeria. One such demands the prohibition of child marriages in Nigeria, as there is currently a law being voted on that would allow them to take place. The petition has almost 150 thousand supporters and is

¹³⁷ Asifa Quraishi. *Who Says Shari'a Demands the Stoning of Women*: 166.

¹³⁸ "Browse Campaigns," *Indiegogo*.

appealing to the United Nations to put pressure on Nigeria.¹³⁹ These petitions' successfulness is difficult to ascertain. What the petitions do is "help play a role in forming and maintaining transnational advocacy groups by creating a point of unity."¹⁴⁰ They create a network for organizations to gain support in, hopefully allowing future endeavors to be easier, even if the petition does not succeed in its goal.

Conclusion

While it is difficult for many women's rights organizations to navigate into the international arena, they are still frequently succeeding. The surprising thing about Nigerian DNGOs is mostly their success. In many ways the odds are stacked against the organizations, yet they have worked their way into the INGO world, either traditionally into the larger organizations, or sometimes by creating their own international community of organizations, such as the Women Living Under Muslim Laws. There are times when the Nigerian organizations are not successful, and there are many small NGOs with no international ties, but there are many that are navigating the difficulty of staying relevant locally and getting the international aid they need, or bypassing the international NGO structure.

¹³⁹ E. Awa. "United Nations: Stop the Nigerian Senate from Making Under-Age Marriage the Law!" *Change.org*: <http://www.change.org/petitions/united-nations-stop-the-nigerian-senate-from-making-under-age-marriage-the-law>

¹⁴⁰ Michael Strange. "'Act now and sign our joint statement!'" What role do online global group petitions play in transnational movement networks?" *Media Culture and Society* 33. 2011: 1251

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Domestic NGOs have challenges when working with their international counterparts. The gatekept world of international feminism does not allow all viewpoints in. Gatekeeping as a theory is a necessary evil, it would be impossible to support every organization, and impractical to try. In practice, as in the two case studies of Nigeria and India this necessary restriction negatively impacts the domestic organizations. Many have successfully worked around it, but they have spent more time and resources that could have been spent working on issues within their area.

The cases used in this work did have their limitations. Because both countries have industrialized economies and relatively high internet access, the organizations have advantages that might not be present elsewhere, making it even more difficult for DNGOs to successfully manage their international interactions. Research into more agricultural states, states with worse access to education, and states with worse internet access might yield even more difficulties for domestic activists' work. The two countries were also heavily colonized by the British, which made them ideal for my purposes, as most research done in the area is written in English, but does mean that there may be some bias from British imperialism. A wider swath of research, one which attempted to quantify the work of organizations, seeing if concentration on certain issues grants more international support was beyond the scope of this thesis, but could provide more insight to the process of gatekeeping.

Domestic NGOs must work with international ones because of the resources that INGOs possess. INGOs hold the ear of committees and have support that can be

transferred to a domestic organization when necessary. Because of this power imbalance, DNGOs change to fit the INGO standards, even when they are not working directly with the INGO.

It is easy to imagine that the international advocacy for women's rights is generally positive, that the relationships between international and domestic are symbiotic. Theorists such as Keck and Sikkink provide models for international advocacy being so effective. There are times when international advocacy is effective, but to discard the critical lens is unfair. Just as feminism within any given country is messy and disputed, it is so on the international scale. There are still groups who hold more power, and the positive outlook is not always fair.

There is no way to fully escape the realities of gatekeeping, but by circumnavigating existing ones, some organizations can get more support than they otherwise would have. These successful navigations do not completely solve the problems of acquiring international support, but they do allow DNGOs to pick where and how they want to fight their battles. As alternate transnational advocacy networks become more established, and internet access spreads, hopefully the gatekeeping of organizations will break down further, rather than becoming entrenched, as globally south INGOs have to make the same choices as their northern counterparts, and internet users cherry pick causes that already have an interest in.

The alternate avenues of gatekeeping have presented domestic women's rights activists with more ways to be pushed into holding certain views, rather than alleviating problems of a universal feminism instead of a pluralistic one. International feminism's

hold on domestic women's rights activists extends even beyond their traditional gatekeeping. The INGOs and IOs no longer have control of the international arena, but the majority of donors and individual supporters are from the same backgrounds and have the same biases present in international feminism as a whole. Domestic NGOs have little choice but to accept certain restrictions upon their work if they desire to receive international recognition and support for their work.

It would be nice to imagine that this will change in the future, but until there is a shift in feminism as a whole, it seems unlikely. The alternate avenues to traditional gatekeeping expressed in chapter five may loosen the restrictiveness as time goes on, but it does not appear to be removing it.

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APPENDIX 1: TABLES

Table 1

Recipient Voluntary Organization, 2001-2002

Recipient	State	Affiliation Branch/Parent Org	
BAPSS	Gujarat	Hindu	Foreign
Gospel for Asia	Kerala	Christian	Foreign
World Vision of India	Tamil Nadu	Christian	Foreign
Caritas, India	Dehli	Christian	Foreign
Foster Parents Plan	Andhra Pradesh	Christian	Foreign
Rural Development Trust	Andhra Pradesh	Christian	Foreign
Action Aid	Karnataka	Non-religious	Foreign
Church's Auxiliary	Dehli	Christian	Domestic
Maharishi Ved Vigyan Vishwa Vidyapeetham	Andhra Pradesh	Hindu	Foreign
Services Associations	Tamil Nadu	Christian	Foreign
Mata Amritanandmayi	Kerala	Hindu	Foreign
Om Sakthi Narayani Siddar Peedam Charitable Trust	Tamil Nadu	Hindu	Foreign
Sri Sathya Sai	Andhra Pradesh	Hindu	Domestic
The Leprosy Mission	Dehli	Christian	Foreign
The Church's Council	Karnataka	Christian	Domestic
Oxfam India Trust	Dehli	Non-religious	Foreign
Comprehensive Rehabilitation Organization and Service Society	Karnataka	Non-religious	Domestic
SOS Children's Village of India	Dehli	Non-religious	Foreign
Tibetan Children's Village	Himachal Pradesh	Non-religious	Domestic
Save the Children's Fund	Dehli	Non-religious	Foreign
Indo-German Social Service	Dehli	Christian	Foreign
Missionaries of Charity	West Bengal	Christian	Domestic
India Campus Crusade for Christ	Karnataka	Christian	Foreign
Dalai Lama's Central Tibetan Relief	Himachal Pradesh	Buddhist	Domestic
AMG India International	Andhra Pradesh	Christian	Foreign

*Source: Receipt of Foreign Contributions by Voluntary Associations, Annual Report 2001-2002, Ministry of Home Affairs, India.
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Table 2

Recipient Voluntary Organization, 2009-2010

Recipient	State	Branch/Parent Org
World Vision of India	Tamil Nuda	Foreign
Rural Development Trust	Andhra Pradesh	Domestic
Shri Seyassubramaria Nadar Educational Charitable Trust	Tamil Nuda	???
Believers Church India	Kerala	Foreign
Caruna Bal Vikas	Tamil Nuda	Domestic
Women's Development Trust	Andhra Pradesh	Domestic
Sri Sri Jagadguru Shankaracharya	Kamataka	Domestic
Action Aid	Kamataka	Foreign
Save the Children	Dehli	Foreign
SOS Children's Village of India	Dehli	Foreign
Love India Ministries	Kerala	???
Oxfam Trust	Dehli	Foreign
Plan International Inc	Dehli	Foreign
Tibetan Children's Village	Himachal Pradesh	Domestic
Missionaries of Charity	West Bengal	Foreign
Sri Sathya Sai	Andhra Pradesh	Domestic
Population Services International	Dehli	Foreign
Aga Khan Foundation	Dehli	Domestic
Gospel for Asia	Kerala	Foreign
Bohasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha	Gujarat	Domestic
Compassion East India	West Bengal	Foreign
Church's Auxiliary	Dehli	Domestic
A.M.G India International	Andhra Pradesh	Foreign
Pratham Mumbai Education	Maharashtra	Domestic
Caritas India	Dehli	Foreign

Source: Receipt of Foreign Contributions by Voluntary Associations, Annual Report 2009-2010, Ministry of Home Affairs, India



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