

## Upholding Feminist Principles in the Era of Globalization: Challenges faced by Women's Activists in Finding Balance between Core Values and Organizational Practices in Women's Movement-based Organizations

Susanna George

*"Perhaps work like this can provoke feminist and antiracist theory to provide a more complete language of organizational process and practice for feminist workplaces. A language is needed that will help to analyse and address the contradiction between the emancipatory goals of groups and their internal practice, between their interest in transforming social relations towards liberatory power relations and the tense, conflicted organizational culture of many women's groups. Organizational development theory, as it currently exists, has been developed largely in the corporate world. It is premised on empiricism and on liberal ideas of the self and the right of individuals; it is generally devoid of critical content on context or power relations".*

Honor Ford-Smith, (1997) <sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

My experiences over the past two decades, both as a volunteer and as a salaried staff member of a number of feminist organizations, networks and groupings, have led me to similar insights as Ford-Smith describes in the quote above. I too discovered that often there appears to be a "contradiction between the emancipatory goals of groups and their internal practices". Despite our mission of transforming social relations in the societies and national contexts from which we have emerged, in many feminist organizations, what we advocate externally, we actually struggle to realize and enact in our internal organizational settings. In other words, "walking our talk" appears to be a serious challenge for many feminists, both individually and organizationally.

I sought the opportunity of the Asian Public Intellectuals (API) Fellowship programme to revisit some of my notions drawn and observations made over the course of two decades working in the women's movement as an organizations-based feminist activist. My last full-time position as executive director was fraught with challenges and struggles as I attempted to create a feminist workspace and find congruence between principles and practices amidst often implicit or hidden assumptions, cultural norms and expectations of staff members and the Board.

My research honed in on the following core question:

*What priority do feminists working in feminist/women's human rights organizations in the Philippines, Indonesia and Japan place to manifesting/enacting their core feminist values in their internal organizational structures, systems, processes and practices?*

Within that I sought to:

- i) bring to the surface the kinds of challenges faced by feminists leaders in running their organizations;
- ii) understand how their organizational core values around hierarchy, decision-making and leadership are shaped;
- iii) explore the (re)negotiations and strategies that they evolve in relation to perceived core values as their organizations have grown or responded to local/national contexts,
- iv) gauge their understanding of their changing circumstances in the national, post-colonial, pro-globalization contexts of the Philippines, Indonesia and Japan and its impact on their organizations; and,
- v) offer spaces where feminists could safely engage in reflective discussions regarding these issues.

I use the term "we" deliberately above, as my positioning throughout this research has been as someone from within, a feminist activist who

imagines herself as movement-based and a part of a larger feminist whole. Through this research, I sought to engage other feminist activists and scholars as peers and participants to an issue area that I discovered resonated quite a bit with many of the feminists I met. When I scratched the surface of any organization or individual with some probing questions, inevitably, I would find that the issue of greater congruence between organizational values and practices, structures and processes was one that others also struggled with. Other feminists also desired to create feminist workspaces that are empowering, sustainable and living examples of the transformation we want to see in the world.

### Methodology

I define this project as qualitative research that is feminist in nature, and anchored in a feminist research methodology. Rather than stating what “is” or uncovering “the truth,” about feminist organizations and the way feminists run them, I wanted a research framework that suited the more dialogic, emergent ways in which I understand organizations in my own work as an organizational consultant and an activist. I never once assumed I could be a dispassionate observer from outside of the phenomena of feminist organizations. Given my subjectivity from the outset, I sought to use my very presence in my research context as a research event<sup>2</sup> of sorts.

An important component of my methodology was finding personal congruence. I had to first uncover my own mental model—and untangle the layers of notions I had been subconsciously loyal to. From this exercise, I saw that I started this project seeking to validate the notion that there was some kind of intrinsically “feminist” way of running organizations. I was also seeking to find a more radical reading of feminist organizational processes, a reading that would take into account the particular post-colonial dynamic of women’s organizations receiving aid from international donor agencies, and how this links to the current geo-political and economic dynamics between countries of the North and those of the South.

I also wanted this project to link to my concern for the larger social justice struggles for democracy and new democratic meaning outside of the neo-liberal capitalist framework. However, at a later stage in the research, I realized that examining the influence of receiving aid from international donor agencies was not an angle I could do justice to, given time constraints. I dropped these questions for my interview guide, and just focused on examining what values congruence meant to feminists in the contexts of their organizations.

My core research setting was feminist/women’s rights activists working in an organization that was either explicitly feminist in its identity or worked with a conscious feminist ethos towards realizing a feminist vision of social transformation.<sup>3</sup> As a secondary research setting, I also sought to engage: i) older feminists who had founded or co-founded feminist organizations in the 1980s and early 1990s and who may or may not have been functioning any longer in an organizational setting; and, ii) younger feminists who had founded, co-founded, or been active in feminist organizations or groupings in the past decade (i.e. since 2000).

With each organization I worked with, I chose three key modalities for data gathering: i) semi-structured interviews with the leader/s of the organization; ii) “workshop style” group interviews with the leadership group/management committee and/or Board of the organization; and, iii) a half-day facilitated workshop with the staff members of the organization examining personal values and organizational values. With the individual feminists, I used semi-structured interviews that also explored personal values and organizational values, as well as their insights as leaders and on feminist leadership.

I sought to straddle my roles of researcher-facilitator-rainer in a way that would create a research event. I also experimented with facilitated workshops as a research methodology that would produce useful data while at the same time create a space where research participants could become more reflective of their own values, assumptions, attitudes and behaviors.<sup>4</sup> I engaged feminists in conversation

and *trusted* how they understood and perceived their organizations. I made no attempt to diagnose their organizations against some “gold standard,” nor did I seek to assess or judge them as feminists. I stated this at the outset of interviews and it helped allay any doubts or fears that those interviewed might have. I encouraged all those I interviewed to engage in personal story-telling, as a way of encouraging reflection on their own values formation.<sup>5</sup> As such, the research was far more focused on attitudes and perceptions of the research participants than a closer reading of their actual organizational processes and practices.

In total, I managed to include seven organizations in my research; two in the Philippines, four in Indonesia and one in Japan. I also interviewed a total of 48 individual feminists, either individually or in group interviews; 12 in the Philippines, 16 in Indonesia and 20 in Japan (See Appendix 1 for details).

### **Theorizing on Organizations and Organizational Values**

How one understands organizations determines very much how one then views what happens within them, and where the potential for transformation lies. I understand organizations as living systems, as inter-dependent structures made up of “people in interactive relationships with the multiplied complexity of all the individual people involved” (The Barefoot Collective, 2009). In this research, I was trying to get a sense of how the visible aspects of the organization such as its structure, governance, decision-making, policies and practices were shaped by the more invisible aspects of the organization such as values, principles, assumptions and unique and unwritten behaviors and logic. The interaction between these two aspects of the organization is what can be defined as organizational culture.

There are numerous definitions of organizational culture. E.Schein (pg. 17, 2004) describes culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external

adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems”. Rao, Stuart and Kelleher (pg. 13, 1999) who have pioneered work on the hidden structures of gender inequality in organizations refer to this as the “deep structure” of the organization, “that collection of values, history, culture and practices that form the unquestioned, ‘normal’ way of working as an organization”.

Arising from definitions of organizational culture, different theorists have attempted to provide a structured model of studying organizational culture. Among them is Schein’s three-level model of organizational culture. In this model, Schein starts with underlying assumptions at the bottom, espoused values in the middle and artifacts and behaviors at the top (Schein, 2004). This model indicates that artifacts and behaviors (that which is observable) emanate from values (which are both explicit and implicit) and which are in turn based on sets of assumptions (hidden norms and social agreements).

Since I was interested in the congruence of espoused values and organizational practices, I found useful R. Barrett’s (2006) emphasis on values as pivotal to organizational culture. He was also influenced by Ken Wilbur’s (1996) whole systems approach to change, and used Wilbur’s Four Quadrant Model of understanding human systems to understand the linkages between individual (personal) values, actions and behaviors and collective (organizational) group values, actions and behaviors.

In Barrett’s model there are four levels of alignment needed in an organization to reduce what he describes as the “degree of cultural entropy”<sup>6</sup> and to increase productivity. In essence, he theorizes that where there is a greater level of congruence between personal and organizational values, there’s a higher degree of productivity. Although I did not use this model explicitly to construct the research, I did use the model as an input in my interviews and workshop and an entry point into reflective conversations.

### Theorizing on Feminist Organizations

There appears to be a gap in scholarly works that examine in depth the structures, processes, organising principles and ethos of movement-based feminist/women's human rights organizations in the South. From what is available, however, it would be safe to say that there is a general sense that the organizations founded by feminists are somehow *different* from and *alternative* to mainstream organizations. A broad definition of feminist organizations would be that they "are seen as doing the work of the women's movement and realising feminist goals in society".<sup>7</sup> There are also seen as the spaces where women are conscientized and nurtured into activism.

In feminist circles, the development of alternative organizational forms has been viewed as an integral expression of a feminist politics as well as a feminist alternative to mainstream society.<sup>8</sup> The view that feminist organizations are qualitatively different in ethos and practice than other organizations is strongly held by many and expressed by many different feminist scholars, including those writing from the South (Ferguson, 1984; Helen Brown, 1990, Gandhi and Shah, 1992; Batliwala, 2008, Ford-Smith, 1997). This difference has very much to do with the ideological underpinnings of feminism that strongly critique male domination and the ways it manifests in society. The bureaucratic, hierarchical model of organization has been seen as intrinsically linked to the exercise of patriarchal power in society. Feminist organizations were seen by many of their founders as spaces for alternative models of organizing to be manifest.

Terms such as "non-hierarchical", "participatory", "collectives", "consensual decisionmaking", "flatter hierarchies", "collective leadership systems" are rife in the limited literature available about feminist organizations. As politically significant as these concepts are to feminists, more than one scholar has noted how much harder these ideals are to realize in reality. Riger as quoted by Arnold notes that "precisely because of their politically symbolic importance, issues concerning organizational structure...have time and again been the rocks

upon which feminist groups have been shipwrecked".<sup>9</sup> Riger touches upon a truism that few feminists have been able to adequately deal with in their organizations. The deep investment many feminists have to notions of non-hierarchy, collectivism and egalitarianism as core feminist values can make the exercise of leadership and management within their organizations a serious challenge. Too often feminist organizations find themselves "shipwrecked" over these principles that are difficult to actualize in their organizational settings.

As organizations both in the North and South have changed and evolved over time, institutionalized, and received external sources of funding, many feminist groups have practiced what Claire Renelt described as "politics of engagement". According to Renelt, a "politics of engagement" is "based on a belief that long-term social change depends on mobilizing and educating women in their communities by creating autonomous institutions, and on establishing relationships and structures of communication with those who work in and set policy for mainstream institutions".<sup>10</sup> Over the decades, many feminists have engaged in direct advocacy with the State and its policy and treaty-making bodies at national, regional and international levels. Likewise, feminist organizations in the South have increasingly been open to receiving funding from external sources. This has in turn put pressure on organizations to structure themselves in ways that make them trustworthy and accountable to external donors and legitimate representatives of women's concerns.

Leadership and decision-making structures become tricky affairs as organizations evolve to meet new challenges and change from the early founding stages to more established entities. As structures are developed and new processes put in place, those who founded organizations often find it hard to relinquish their central role in the organizations to which they have invested their lives. A couple of younger feminists working in a regional women's rights organization don't mince words when they stated: "We have observed that most feminist organizations thus have a matriarch who seeks control over the organization...Heads

of women's organizations and their management structures often play power games with their subordinates which run counter to feminist thinking and double standards abound".<sup>11</sup>

Jo Freeman in her classic 1973 essay, *Tyranny of Structurelessness*, warns against assuming that collectives would function in completely egalitarian ways. The absence of structure, and clear articulation of roles, functions and processes, she argued, could merely mask hierarchies rather than eliminate them. Jo Freeman strongly critiques the notion that a group can be structureless and leaderless, and that in fact all groups inevitably structure themselves over time. The idea of structurelessness, Freeman argues, "becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others".<sup>12</sup> Given how hard it appears to negotiate, work through and manifest more collectivist and non or lesser hierarchical models organization, and how much judgement and debate has arisen over this question, Martin (1990) questions the emphasis placed in academic and activist circles about whether and how feminist organizations mirror feminist principles in their internal structures and processes to the neglect of other qualities.<sup>13</sup> Even so, feminist scholars Alexander and Mohanty make an articulate case for feminist collectivities and organizations as a central aspect of transformational practice in a postcolonial and transnational context.<sup>14</sup> They posit decolonization as an essential component of feminist visions of democracy and "the practice of thinking of oneself as part of feminist collectivities and organizations" as a counter to the "liberal pluralist individual self" promoted in a globalized capitalist context.<sup>15</sup> Collective practice is seen as central therefore "in transformation of the self and re-envisioning organizational democracy, and anchors feminist thinking".

### **The Notion of Collectivism in the Feminist Psyche**

At the outset of this project, I brushed off comments that likened my research to comparing apples and oranges with an unshakeable belief that I would find a common "feminist soul" in the feminist organizations that I encountered in the three

countries. The nagging fear that the sceptics might have a point was finally confirmed by my encounter with Japanese feminists. The stark contrast between feminist organizations and the state of feminist organizing in Japan and those that I encountered in Indonesia and the Philippines helped me crystallize some of the insights that emerged from this research project. I summarize them below:

- *The values, structures and practices of feminist organizations in the Philippines, Indonesia and Japan are far more influenced by norm, standards, socio-political events, culture and history of the national and social contexts from which they emerge than some more universal feminist code of ethics or value base they may ascribe to.* For example, many organizational feminists in Indonesia that I encountered were very interested in mass-based organizing, and were a part of networks that were seeking to network and unify women from all strata of society. Solidaritas Perempuan (SP), for example has over 900 members, while Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI) touts over 30,000 members. There is no bashfulness or doubt in wanting to keep expanding their organizations, and there was very little doubt in any of those I encountered that they could do this in a way that was keeping with feminist principles. Soshiren, a reproductive health and rights advocacy group in Japan, has deliberately chosen to stay relatively small, with under 20 women in its core group, and 200+ newsletter subscribers, and has chosen not to register as a formal organization despite being active for over two decades. In Indonesia, when asked about what influenced the formation of their organizations, and the desire to rebuild mass based organizations, many of the respondents recalled the history of GERWANI, a mass-based women's organization that was vilified, had many of its members raped and murdered and then was banned by Suharto in the 1960s, and needing to re-build a mass-based movement to realize feminist goals. In Japan however, many feminists spoke with aversion about formal,

hierarchical organizations as replicating the dominant, patriarchal norms that render the Japanese imperial system as undefilable and supreme. Soshiren is just one of several feminist organizations that has chosen to stay small enough to maintain its collective structure and processes. Formal registration as a non-profit entity is seen as a part of conforming to the mainstream, and thus not matching with their understanding of the way that feminists organize. In both cases, the understandings of organizational form were in response to their national socio-political, historical and cultural contexts, even though both responses were viewed by those involved as “feminist” responses.

- *Whatever form their organizations take across the three countries, most feminists carry in their psyche the notion that collective/consensual/democratic processes are indeed a “feminist” imperative and a touchstone in feminism.* It was in Japan I understood how deeply embedded notions of collectivism, non-hierarchy and total equality can be in feminist organizing, when left unchallenged. Here, I found that there were ideas about feminism and feminist organizing that date back to the 1970s in the United States. The “Women’s Libbers” of Japan were deeply influenced by the early days of the second wave of the women’s movement<sup>16</sup> in the United States, and the notion of pure collectivism as the only “true” form of feminist organizing seems to have withstood the test of time. Feminist groups are for the most part very small, unstructured, and when interviewed, feminists from these groups insisted that “everyone was a leader” and that there was absolutely no need for hierarchy and only minimal structure. Feminist organizations that did exist as formal entities were few and most of them also adopted some measure of collective or consensual process in their decision-making. In the Philippines and Indonesia, it appears that for feminists in both these countries, there is far less resistance to mass-based organizing, registering as a formal entity, and adopting structures and systems

that enhance their legitimacy as advocates of women’s rights. Perhaps this has something to do with the way resistance movements to the military dictatorships in these countries organized themselves, and then later gained legitimacy when these dictatorships were overthrown. Also unlike Japan, in both the Philippines and Indonesia, development aid has flowed into social movements, and women’s organizations like other social movement organizations have eventually needed to formalize and structure themselves in ways that they were recognized as legitimate recipients of development funding. Even so, members of large organizations with hierarchical structures such as Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia and Solidaritas Perempuan in Indonesia, and Gabriela in the Philippines, when interviewed, were very definite about the ways in which they ensured consensual decision-making through their structures and systems. SP, for example, has developed over the years a very thick organizational policy document known as the Anggaran Rumah tangga that details all processes of the organization including how to ensure the maximum amount of consensus-building, democracy and transparency in their decision-making. At its national congress held in 2012, SP members were unperturbed by an elections process for the office bearers of their organization that went late into the night and right through the next day. When asked casually about the lengthy process of elections the following day, a couple of the members confirmed that they were satisfied with the process because it was based on consensus and was an expression of democratic practice.

- *This notion of collectivity/consensuality as a feminist imperative is implicit in the minds of its members, both voluntary and paid, and sometime becomes a source of tension as the organization formalizes and institutionalizes.* One of the reasons why feminist groups, workplaces and organizations struggle around issues of decision making and leadership is that

those who join feminist/women's rights groupings are looking for an alternative to mainstream society. Even those who are not feminist and join initially purely for economic or other reasons, soon come to share in the belief that democratic, participatory and consensual processes are the way feminist organizations "should be". Where research participants were facing or recalled conflicts in their organizations, few were able to decipher their own mental maps of how the world was, how people are and how organizations "should" be. The disappointment that people were almost always related to an expectation they had about their colleagues, fellow members or bosses, about how they thought they "should" behave as feminists activists or leaders.

- *Feminist leaders find themselves surrounded by a complex set of unspoken expectations around how they must conduct themselves in a feminist organizational setting.* Feminists in leadership positions often find themselves under severe scrutiny in relation to their conduct and performance as leaders. Batliwala (2011) points to the fact that our understanding of leadership depends upon "our cultural context, our history and the dominant models and practices of leadership that is deeply embedded in us". I added the question on feminist leadership into my interview guide late, so only asked this question in Indonesia and Japan. In Indonesia, where many feminist organizations have a clear structure of leadership, I found greater certainty of response to questions about feminist leadership—meaning, people had a picture of the type of attitudes, traits, skills and perspectives that were necessary to be effective as a feminist leader. Those in leadership that I interviewed were for the most part reflective on what they thought was required of them as leaders and the challenges they faced in measuring up to expectations. One executive director of a feminist organization in Indonesia described her role as the following: "I constantly try to make decisions in a collective manner, in a participatory manner,

because what worries me is that if I don't make decisions collectively, I will be regarded as authoritarian later. But it is really not all decisions that need to be taken collectively. Some decisions I could take on my own. In this short period, the past month or two, I've been looking for how to exercise collective leadership in a way that does not create hidden power"...<sup>17</sup> In contrast, those I interviewed in leadership positions in Japan, with one or two exceptions, found it hard to speak about themselves as leaders and could not describe characteristics or values needed in a leader. In one case, despite being a clear leader for over two decades in her organization with over 300 members and a well-known advocate in different social movement forums, the respondent found it hard to respond to different questions about feminist leadership. When asked if she considered herself a leader, she responded after some prompting, "I consider myself an activist but I don't think I am a feminist leader...maybe just of my organization". She then went on to explain, "I became a feminist without noticing myself, so it was difficult for me to get the idea of feminist organization or feminist processes".<sup>18</sup> In all three countries, several respondents spoke about the importance of leaders themselves being congruent and consistent with the values that the organisation/feminist movement espoused. Where feminists in leadership positions had failed to meet the standard of congruence in the eyes of their colleagues or staff members, however, I found that they tended to be judged not as poor managers, but rather as not sufficiently feminist.

### **Priority placed on enacting feminist values in internal organizational practices**

To a great extent, I found that in most of the organizations included in the research, and in the individual interviews conducted, manifesting feminist values in internal organizational processes

and practices was of high priority. In some organizations, it was an explicit effort, which was deliberated upon and put into policies and practices—however in others it was assumed and little discussed. Following are some of the insights in terms of values congruence that emerged from this research:

- In the organizations where the staff members expressed satisfaction with their workplace environments, there was indeed a relatively high degree of alignment between the personal values of the staff members with other staff members, and between personal values of individual staff members and the organization's overall core values.
- Likewise, where there was alignment between the organization's espoused values and its actual practices, staff members reflected upon these with some pride. The actual practices were varied and each organization developed ways to enact a feminist ethos differently. In Kapal Perempuan in Indonesia, staff members actually ate lunch together, and people chipped into the lunch on a sliding scale depending on their salary. In keeping with their shared values of respect for diversity and fairness, this same organization had the same health insurance, leave and benefits extend equally to the families of their Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) staff members as they did their heterosexual staff members. Staff of Likhaan in the Philippines described how the internal equity issue that kept the gap in incomes between the director and the most junior staff member modest was a strong expression of its feminist ethos. When discussing the organization's core value of equality, one staff explained: "In Likhaan, we're really not equal in terms of position...we develop the ED as our boss and she has a very high position but we also believe that she's also equal with us. No hierarchy regardless if you're executive, if you're driver, we're both equal here.. because we're both working".

A couple of other staff in Likhaan described how they had developed a very strict organizational value around being on time, and this was strictly enforced and appreciated by all because it applied equally to everyone.

- What is or is not feminist practice and ethos is highly subjective, and very context specific. In Japan, for example, the idea that activism must be completely voluntary and unpaid is one that holds strong in feminist circles. Likewise, formally registering as a non-profit organization was a decision that drew a lot of contention from members in one feminist organization, one of the arguments being that to register would be to conform to a patriarchal form of organization. In this context, it was useful to share with Japanese feminists I encountered, the kinds of formal mechanisms and structures to ensure democracy and accountability in the context of large feminist organizations in Indonesia, and the fact that many activists in both the Philippines and Indonesia are paid for their work. I presented this information as a way of gently challenging the many "shoulds" and "musts" in relation to feminist organizing and organizations I found in the Japanese context, and to a large extent, it was well received.<sup>19</sup>
- Where there was not a lot of open discussion of values and principles, organizations tend to develop an unspoken culture based on norms and assumptions often deemed "feminist". Only when these norms and assumptions are not adhered to do they become visible or a source of tension in the group. One example of an unspoken norm is the expectation that those working in a feminist setting understand, support and are comfortable with and support gay and lesbian rights. In response to one of the interview questions in the research, a couple of staff members of one of the feminist organizations that participated in



the research expressed an inner conflict around the issue of gay and lesbian rights stemming from their religious beliefs. There had never been an open discussion within the organization and so she maintained silence on the matter despite feeling an inner struggle. Every member of an organization carries with him or her one's own mental map based on their own value system and sets of experiences, and if this is not actually discussed openly and negotiated, it could create an environment where conflict can easily arise in unexpected moments.

- A key factor in how people felt in their organizational setting had to do with the leadership (even in organizations where no leaders were acknowledged). It was clear through the research, that those interviewed, both leaders and other staff members of feminist organizations had some definite ideas of what qualities a leader must have, and when interrogated these were often very specific to their culture, family and/or sets of experiences of leaders in other contexts. Those heading the organizations that I included in the research were very aware of such expectations that others had of them, and found different ways to minimize hierarchical relationship with their colleagues. Three executive directors that I interviewed, for example, did not have a separate room from their staff and sat in a shared office space with either the administrative staff, or in a general area where other staff members also sat. Some of the qualities that appeared to be most sought after and thought needed in feminist leaders were clear vision, humility, capacity to listen, accountability and grounding in feminist understanding. Most importantly, where leaders did practice what they preached and where everyone was equally held to the same standards, there was a greater sense of alignment and wellbeing.

## Conclusion

Over the course of the research year, many of my assumptions were challenged and revisited, and many of my notions and guesses were confirmed or refined. Time and space for reflective conversations that touch at a deeper level on values, ethics, and relationships are rare commodities for feminist activists. I contend that when assumptions, hidden norms and meanings are uncovered and understood, and values are negotiated by all those who make up an organization, there is a greater chance of the organization's finding balance, and being supportive of community and productive workplaces.

In this regard, a researcher-activist could facilitate such a process, and create the opportunity for a different kind of conversation such that it supports the organization's evolution and growth. The "findings" of this research are useful as conversation starters, and as ways of engaging different groups of feminists in reflective processes. I believe there is a lot of potential and room for starting conversations that Bushe and Marshak (2009) describe as a more dialogic kind of organizational development practice that attempts to "create containers and processes that allow stories to be told, narratives and patterns be made sense of, and new ideas that could generate change emerge from the group that made up the organizational system". Rather than attempting to influence and change what people do, there is value in engaging people in many more conversations that influence how they think about their organizations and their roles within them.

---

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Pg. 213, Ring Ding in a Tight Corner: Sistren, Collective Democracy and the Organisation of Cultural Production in M.J. Alexander and C.T. Mohanty. *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York: Routledge

<sup>2</sup> A research event is a happening that occurs within the research setting where observation about the cultural relations of those participating in the research can be made. In this research, I tried to maintain the awareness of what A. Holliday (pg. 140, 2007) notes: "The people in a research setting are as culturally skilled as the researcher, and have the potential, if

they wish to be as much involved as the researcher in negotiating the research event...both the researcher and the people in the research setting enter into a relationship of culture making”...

<sup>3</sup> “An organization that works towards realizing a feminist vision of social transformation” borrows from two frameworks: i) Patricia Yancey Martin in “Rethinking Feminist Organizations” provides ten criteria by which to assess a feminist organization, suggesting that meeting five of these ten criteria should be sufficient to be recognized as a feminist organization; and, ii) Chandra Mohanty Talpade in *Feminism Without Borders*, understands feminist practice as operating “at a number of levels: at the level of daily life through the everyday acts that constitute our identities and relational communities; at the level of collective action in groups, networks and movements constituted around feminist visions of social transformation; and at the levels of theory, pedagogy, and textual creativity in the scholarly and writing practices of feminist engaged in the production of knowledge”.

<sup>4</sup> In the research methodology that I call the “workshop approach” to data-gathering which I used in the organization component of the research, I engaged the staff members in a series of facilitated processes that enable them to: i) encounter their own core value base; ii) reflect about those values that they understand as core to their organization; iii) compare their core values with those of others in the staff grouping, and with what they perceive as their organization’s; and iv) come up with a set of examples that they would define as examples of where their organization’s core values are expressed in their organizational practices. I used the Differentiate/Integrate (D/I) method familiar in facilitation, meaning differentiate interests in a group before integrating them (Weisbord and Janoff, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> As Schein (2004), Barrett (2006), Rao (1997), Acker (1990) and others have noted, culture is shaped by hidden norms and values in an organization. Very often our personal norms and values are hidden from ourselves. Without being in a self-reflexive mode, it is unlikely that the research participants will be able to provide responses to my questions from the space I would like their responses to emerge from.

<sup>6</sup> Barrett’s definition of cultural entropy: “the proportion of energy in an organization consumed by non-productive activities [which] occurs when there is a lack of alignment between the four quadrants. Cultural entropy is inversely related to resilience. When cultural entropy is high, resilience is low. When cultural entropy is low, resilience is high”. Pg.115, Barrett, Robert (2006)

<sup>7</sup> Ferree and Martin. 1995

<sup>8</sup> Pg. 266, Gretchen Arnold, Dilemmas of Feminist Coalitions: Collective Identity and Strategic Effectiveness in the Battered Women’s Movement. 1995. and pg. 84 Claire Reinelt. 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Pg. 266, Gretchen Arnold, 1995. “Dilemmas of Feminist Coalitions: Collective Identity and Strategic Effectiveness in the Battered Women’s Movement,” in Ferree & Martin (eds), *Feminist Organisations: Harvest of the New Women’s Movement*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

<sup>10</sup> Pg. 85, Reinelt, Claire. 1995. Moving onto the Terrain of the State: Battered Women’s Movement and the Politics of

Engagement. In Ferree & Martin (eds), *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women’s Movement*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Mishra and Singh. 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Freeman, Jo, The Tyranny of Structurelessness, <http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Martin, Patricia Yancey. 1990

<sup>14</sup> Pg. xxiii, Alexander, M. Jacqui and Mohanty, 1997. Chandra. Talpade, Introduction: Genealogies, Legacies, Movements. In M. J. Alexander and C.T. Mohanty, (eds) *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, New York: Routledge

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> The second wave of the women’s movement is how the period of intense feminist activism and consciousness in the 1960s and the 1970s in the United States and Europe is often described. The ideas that emerged through this period spread to and resonated with national liberation and post-colonial struggles that women were engaged with in other parts of the world through the 1970s and 1980s.

<sup>17</sup> Translated from Bahasa Indonesia, taken from interview transcript.

<sup>18</sup> Translated by a translator from Japanese, taken from audio recording

<sup>19</sup> In one of the workshops that I held, as part of my sharing on my findings in the other countries, I shared some of the critiques of collectives discussed in Jo Freeman’s “Tyranny of Structurelessness”. Within a week of sharing the link to the group, the article was translated into Japanese by one of the feminists present, and then circulated through one of their activist mailing lists.

## REFERENCES

Acker, Joan. 1990. Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender and Society* 4 (2): 139-158

Alexander, M.J. and Talpade Mohanty, Chandra. 1997. *Feminist genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York and London: Routledge

Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID). 2007. *Building Feminist Movements and Organizations: A Global Perspective*. AWID

Barrett, Robert. 2006. *Building a Values-Driven Organization: A Whole Systems Approach to Cultural Transformation*. New York: Elsevier

Batiwala, Srilata. 2011. *Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud*. New Delhi: CREA

Brown, Helen. 1992. *Women Organising*. London and New York: Routledge

- Bushe, Gervase and Marshak, Robert. 2009. Revisioning Organizational Development: Diagnostic and Dialogic Premises and Patterns of Practice. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 45: 348-370
- Ferguson, Kathy E. 1984. *The Feminist Case against Bureaucracy*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Ferree, M. M., and Martin, Patricia Yancey (eds). 1995. *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Freeman, Jo. 1971. "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" <http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm> (Accessed on 22 September 2011)
- Gandhi, Nandita and Shah, Nandita. 1991. *The Issues at Stake: Theory and Practice in the Contemporary Women's Movement in India*, New Delhi: Kali for Women
- Hart, Chris. 1998. *Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Imagination*. London: Sage
- Holliday, A. 2007. *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research, Second Edition*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Mansbridge, J. 1995. 'What is the Feminist Movement?' in M.M. Ferree, and P.Y. Martin(eds) *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Martin, Patricia Yancey. 1990. Rethinking Feminist Organizations. *Gender and Society* 4 (2): 182-206
- Mishra, Yamani and Singh, Nalini. 2007. An Insight into Feminist Organisations. In Lydia Alpizar Duran, Noel P. Payne, Arahi Russo (eds) *Building Feminist Movements and Organisations: Global Perspectives*, AWID
- Rao, Aruna and Stuart, Reiky. 1997. Rethinking Organizations: A Feminist Perspective. *Gender and Development*, 5 (1): 10-16
- Rao, Aruna, Stuart, Reiky and Kelleher, David. 1999. *Gender at Work: Organizational Change for Equality*, <http://www.genderatwork.org/learning-centre>
- Reinelt, Claire. 1995. Moving onto the Terrain of the State: Batter Women's Movement and the Politics of Engagement. In Ferree & Martin (eds), *Feminist Organizations: Harvest of the New Women's Movement*, Temple University Press
- Riger, S. 1984. Vehicles for empowerment: The case of feminist movement organizations. J. Rappoport, C. Smith, and R. Hess, *Studies in Empowerment: Steps to Understanding and Action*. New York: Haworth Press
- \_\_\_\_\_.1994. 'Challenges of Success: Stages of Growth in Feminist Organizations', *Feminist Studies*, 20 (2): 275-300
- Schein, E. (2004) *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. California: Jossey-Bass
- Silverman, David. 2006. *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text and Interactions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. London: Sage
- Smith Honor Ford. 1997. Ring Ding in a Tight Corner: Sistren, Collective Democracy and the Organization of Cultural Production, in M.J. Alexander and C. Talpade Mohanty, *Feminist Geneologies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York: Routledge
- The Barefoot Collective. 2009. *The Barefoot Guide to Working with Organizations and Social Change*, [http://www.barefootguide.org/BFG1\\_Home.htm](http://www.barefootguide.org/BFG1_Home.htm)
- The Barefoot Collective. 2011. *The Barefoot Guide to Learning Practices in Organizations and Social Change*, [http://www.barefootguide.org/BFG\\_2/downloadBFG2.htm](http://www.barefootguide.org/BFG_2/downloadBFG2.htm)
- Wilbur, Ken. 2001. *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*. Boston: Shambhala

## APPENDIX 1

ORGANIZATIONS INCLUDED IN THE RESEARCH	
<b>PHILIPPINES</b>	
1.	Likhaan (Centre for Women's Health Inc.), Quezon City
2.	Gender Watch against Violence and Exploitation (GWAVE), Dumaguete City
<b>INDONESIA</b>	
3.	Kapal Perempuan, Jakarta
4.	KOMNAS Perempuan (National Commission on Violence Against Women), Jakarta
5.	RPUK Banda Aceh (Relawan Perempuan untuk Kemanusiaan), Banda Aceh
6.	Solidaritas Perempuan, Banda Aceh
<b>JAPAN</b>	
7.	Asia Josei Shiro Centre or Asia-Japan Women's Resource Centre (AJWRC), Tokyo

## INDIVIDUAL ACTIVISTS INTERVIEWED AS PART OF THE RESEARCH

**PHILIPPINES**

1. Tita Lubi, Gabriela Party List, Quezon City
2. Aida Santos, WEDPRO, Quezon City
3. Claudia Sylvio Estrada, Likhaan, Quezon City
4. Mari Luz (Maloy) Quesada Tiongson, formerly with WEDPRO & Isis International Manila, Quezon City
5. Teresita (Terret) Balayon, Women's Crisis Centre, Quezon City
6. Ana Dinglasan, Liyab, Quezon City
7. Clem Novales, Liyab, Quezon City
8. JJ Josef, formerly with The Lesbian Collective (TLC) and CLIC, Baguio City
9. Clare Luczon, WomenLead, Quezon City
10. Anne Lim, GALANG Philippines, Quezon City
11. Mary Jane Real, formerly with Ateneo Human Rights Center and the Asia Pacific Women Law and Development (APWLD), Quezon City
12. Eleanor Conda, formerly with the Women's Legal Bureau (WLB), Quezon City

**INDONESIA**

13. Yanti Mochtar, Kapal Perempuan, Jakarta
14. Zohra Baso, Women Concern Forum of South Sulawesi
15. Augustine, Ardhanary Institute, Jakarta
16. Kamala Chandrakirana, formerly of KOMNAS Perempuan, Jakarta
17. Ibu Nunuk Murniati, Solidaritas Perempuan, Jogjakarta
18. Salma Safitri (Fifi), Solidaritas Perempuan, Malang, East Java
19. Ibu Damai Pakpahan, Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, Jogjakarta
20. Tri Nur Hastuti (Nurso), Aisyah Muhammadiyah, Jogjakarta
21. Noviana Dwi Arini, Solidaritas Perempuan, Jogjakarta
22. Siti Habiba Jazila, Jaring Perempuan Jogjakarta, Jogjakarta
23. Budi Wahyuni, Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia, APIK, Yayasan Anisa Swasti, Jogjakarta
24. Dian Kartika, Secretary General, Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, Jakarta
25. Soraiya Kamaruzzaman, RPUK, Banda Aceh
26. Lita Anggraini, Jalar Pekerja Rumah Tangga (JALAR PRT), Jakarta
27. Aditiana Dewi Eridani(Dani), RAHIMA, Jakarta
28. Fathoum Ade (Dede), Perempuan Mahardika, Jogjakarta

**JAPAN**

29. Mina Watanabe, Women's Active Museum for Women's Peace, Tokyo
30. Prof. Kazuko Tanaka, Professor of Gender Studies, International Christian University, Tokyo
31. Chizuko Ueno, Feminist Writer, Women's Action Network (WAN), Tokyo
32. Masaya Niwa, Josei no Anzen to Kenko no Tameno Shenkyo iku Center (Centre for Support and Education for Women's Health and Safety) & AJWRC, Tokyo
33. Chieko Akaishi, Single Women's Forum, Tokyo
34. Naoko Ono, formerly of Asia Japan Women's Resource Center (AJWRC), Tokyo
35. Makiko Matsumoto, Feminist Action Video Collective (FAV) & Asia Japan Women's Resource Center, Tokyo
36. Noriko Seyama, FAV & AJWRC, Tokyo
37. Satoko Yagjura (Satokin), FAV & AJWRC, Tokyo
38. Hwami Park, formerly of Asian Women's Association, belongs to a Zainichi support organization, Tokyo
39. Shigeko Takemori, formerly with Soshiren, Engeki Design Group, Karadano Oshaberu Kai (Body Chatting Group), Tokyo
40. Kyoko Tanaka, Women's Support HotLine, Otaku Municipality, Feming Magazine, Tokyo
41. Mayumi Makita, Women's Counselling Network, Editor of Feming magazine, Tokyo
42. Yayo Okano, Women's Action Network, Kyoto
43. Kumiko Ida, Women's Action Network, Kyoto
44. Misako Ichimura, Nora – Homeless Women's Network, Tokyo
45. Hiroko Hara, Japan Women's Watch (JAWW), Tokyo
46. Hiroko Hashimoto, Japan Women's Watch (JAWW), Tokyo
47. Reiko Aiko, Japan Women's Watch (JAWW), Tokyo
48. Eriko Tanno, Japan Women's Watch (JAWW), Tokyo