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Asia-Pacific GEM

Quarterly Newsletter on Gender and Macroeconomic Issues (GEM) in Asia and the Pacific

Women's Studies Congress: Debating Gender Justice in Asia

Penang, Malaysia was the location of the Second Congress of the Asian Association of Women's Studies held last December 2010. For two and a half days, a total of 118 papers from 26 countries presented their analysis of the various themes of the Congress, which was successfully organized by the [Women's Development Research Centre \(KANITA\)](#) of the Universiti Sains Malaysia. This short article provides an overview of the discussions related to the theme of globalization and alternative development.



Professor Jayati Ghosh

Jayati Ghosh, Professor of Economics at the Jawaharlal Nehru University gave the key note speech where she argued that the pursuit of gender justice requires enabling more egalitarian economic conditions.

Ghosh highlighted several trends in the areas of work and citizenship for Asian women, including: the increasing role of women workers

[continued on page 2]

For Love or Money? Prof. Julie A. Nelson on the Economics of Care

Who does care work? Why is care work paid less than other occupations? What accounts for their low wage?

On January 8, 2011, approximately forty people – scholars and the general public – gathered at a symposium held by the [Institute for Gender Studies \(IGS\)](#) of Ochanomizu University in Tokyo, Japan to reconsider and discuss the current state of care economy. Professor Julie A. Nelson of the University of Massachusetts Boston delivered the keynote speech entitled 'For Love or Money? Current Issues in the Economics of Care.'

'Care work' typically refers to the work that involves 'personalized service to dependent individuals, including children, the sick, and the elderly.' It often requires emotional commitments to the dependent individuals. In contrast to the more common type of paid work, which is assumed to be motivated by self-interest, the conception of care work is considered to be motivated by compassion.



Professor Julie A. Nelson

Conventional economic theories neglect care work as a legitimate form of work that should be counted as an economic and market activity since it is primarily done within the home, is unpaid, and so invisible in the national account. Another reason for the neglect of care work in economic analysis is that it was assumed to be women's work, conducted by their inherent predisposition for nurturing others, and so did not require any special skills.

In actuality, Nelson argues that learned skills are necessary for providing good care. Although medical and scientific knowledge is considered to be an important aspect of nursing care, she argues that knowledge alone does not make a good care worker. Besides knowledge, a good care worker must also provide emotional support to those cared for. Although this emotional *[continued on page 3]*

Inside this issue:

Conference Report: The Second Congress of the Asian Association of Women's Studies "Debating Gender Justice Asia," Penang, Malaysia	1-2
Symposium Report: "For Love or Money? Current Issues in the Economics of Care," Tokyo, Japan	1, 3
New Releases: - Gender Equality and Trade: Coordinating compliance between regimes - Can Trade Policies Promote Gender Equality?: Exploring the trade-growth-gender nexus	3
Call for Applications: - The 2nd Asia-Pacific Intensive course on Gender and Macroeconomic Issues	4
Call for Papers: - IAFPE Annual Conference	
About Us: UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre	4

Announcement: The Regional Intensive Course on Gender and Macroeconomic Issues

The 2nd Asia-Pacific Intensive course on Gender and Macroeconomic Issues will be held in Saitama, Japan, July 3-16 2011. For more information, please see Call for Applications on page 4.

WOMEN'S STUDIES CONGRESS: DEBATING GENDER JUSTICE IN ASIA, PENANG, MALAYSIA

Continued from page 1

in global production chains; the growing phenomenon of economic migration of women; increased burdens of unpaid work after the global economic crisis; varying situations of violence against women, that not only include domestic violence but situations of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction; and, placing attention on gender gaps due to the impact of climate change, where on the one hand inequities can be exacerbated and on the other hand, women's role in social reproduction can contribute to adaptation and mitigation.



Two papers were presented discussing official development assistance (ODA) to the Asian region. Chin-Ming Lin from the Tamkang University in Taiwan discussed a continuing challenge within the aid effectiveness and the MDGs framework based on his research in Indonesia. He argued that ODA can work if combined with dedicated efforts of the recipient government. In the case of Indonesia, his research shows that the ODA could have been more effective in achieving the MDGs if it were accompanied by public policies that enhance women's political and economic empowerment.

A broader perspective on ODA flows was given by Marina Durano from KANITA, who presented on trends of flows of ODA into Asia using the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee's Creditor Reporting System. Gross disbursements data for 2002 to 2007 shows that most of the ODA flows going into Asia are directed towards debt reduction and general budget support, which are policy-related interventions. A large sum goes into the public sector, which supports institutions of government and governance. Only a small

amount of ODA can be identified as supporting gender equality policy objectives, and of this, the money is spent on gender policy in health and education. Efforts at a gender analysis of ODA have focused on gender mainstreaming processes and less attention has been given to the implications of their macroeconomic policy content.

Two papers were presented on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). One by Anita Garido Cular of the University of the Philippines Visayas looked into the experience of municipal level local government units in one city of the Philippines, particularly on how these local government units have used the mandated five percent of their budget for gender and development projects. Units that had a gender focal point delivered on projects better than those without. In general, these local government units covered by the study mostly failed to fulfill the mandate.

A similar conclusion seems to have arisen with the second paper that looked into the GRB experience in the Malaysian context, where it was implemented as a pilot initiative in five ministries. Noor Azizah Ahmad of the Universiti Utara Malaysia interviewed officials from the pilot ministries and the agencies who supported the initiative. She concluded that there has been an uneven understanding of how to implement the initiative. The changes to the budget statements elaborated in the specifics of the project did not necessarily change the overall focus or strategy of each ministry. In some cases, gender focal points expected to implement GRB had a more fundamental challenge of failing to grasp their own role within each ministry as gender focal points.

These papers on globalization and alternative approaches to development point

to the complexities of policy engagement. Ghosh in her key note speech said that the Asian region is the focus of attention in this crisis-ridden world. Its fast growth and expanding economies have placed it in a position of influence and significance on the global stage. This growth and expansion however, is coupled with wider inequalities that continue to be barriers for achieving gender justice. At the same time, the rapidity of socio-economic change in the Asian region means that there are transformations in many aspects that are not always adequately recognized. Finally, the last couple of years have clearly demonstrated the uneven effects of the material dynamism of the region as the impact of the global financial crisis has been felt throughout Asia. The struggle for gender justice must contend with these complexities.

In moving forward, Ghosh suggests that progressive economic policies are needed more than ever to secure enabling conditions for gender justice. Social protection in the Asia region is very weak and needs to be drastically revised and reformed so that it responds to the issues raised above. Given women's lived realities and the challenges they face, the formulation and implementation of policies at both national and international levels must be with the active participation of women. Policy formulation should be on the basis of continuous dialogue with those likely to be affected, and as the declared "objects" of policies, their agency should be recognized as far as possible.



[Contributed, with thanks, by Dr. [Marina Durano](#), Post-Doctoral Fellow, KANITA]

Photos courtesy of KANITA

FOR LOVE OR MONEY? PROF. JULIE A. NELSON ON THE ECONOMICS OF CARE

Continued from page 1

and relational aspect of care work requires learned skills and experience, it is often not considered as work to be rewarded with money but only with warm feelings of self-fulfillment.

Care work can be done for both love and money. However, some studies suggest that care work should not be paid well in order to protect care work from selfish workers doing their jobs just for the sake of financial gain. In other words, care workers must be altruistic and motivated by the genuine desire to care for others.

Alternatively, Nelson argues that the fundamental assumptions held by the conventional economists who make these claims should be reexamined. On the one hand, they assume individuals to be rational and self-interested as a basis for their economic behavior. On the other hand, they bring non-selfish factors into the analysis, in their examination of care workers' low wage.

Professor Kumiko Ida of Osaka Prefecture University, one of the two discussants, sympathized with Nelson's argument that the physical and demanding aspect of care work has been overlooked. Furthermore, she pointed out that the recent trend shows more men are entering care work, but this trend has had limited effect on the improvement of the status of care workers. Rather, it is producing gender disparity within the field of care work; male workers are receiving higher wages and occupying administrative positions. She questioned if there are any effective interventions to address this asymmetrical duality within the care economy.



Professors Mariko Adachi (left) and Kumiko Ida

The other discussant, Professor Mariko Adachi of IGS, Ochanomizu University underlined the significance of the feminist economist perspective to explain why the wage for care work has been kept low. As Nelson argued in her keynote speech, there is a wide-spread and deep-rooted assumption that a good female care worker should not ask for money. The symbolic effect of this modern universally constructed femininity needs to be reexamined to give a more plausible explanation for the care economy. The symposium concluded with an active discussion involving the audience.

The keynote speech by Professor Nelson will be published in the forthcoming issue of the IGS's *Journal of Gender Studies*, in March 2011.

[Contributed, with thanks, by Dr. Ryoko Ishikawa, Associate Fellow, IGS]

Photos courtesy of IGS

NEW RELEASES: TWO BRIEF PAPERS ON TRADE AND GENDER

The [North-South Institute's](#) new policy brief [Gender Equality and Trade: Coordinating compliance between regimes](#) discusses international trade agreements through a gendered lens, illuminating that whilst trade treaties generate many economic winners, they also produce losers – a disproportionate number of which are women. The Brief explores trade's relationship to three key areas: poverty reduction, human rights and equality rights.

With regard to trade and poverty reduction, the paper argues that focusing on the gender dimension of trade liberalization allows for a broader view of poverty reduction and sustainable development which will be more effective at meeting the needs of both men and women.

Traditionally, consideration of the human rights implications of trade relations has been widely ignored, with the odd exception such as the UN-sanctioned trade boycott of apartheid South Africa. There is a growing consensus however, that neglecting human rights concerns whilst negotiating trade relations can limit governments' ability to meet their legal obligations regarding human rights and gender equality. Simply proclaiming anti-

discrimination is not good enough but concrete measures to ensure gender equality rights and women's work place rights are needed. Moreover, attention is required when formulating trade agreements as to the affect on the lives and livelihoods of individuals, particularly of local and indigenous peoples.

This paper concludes that designing and implementing policy that accounts for differing impacts of global trade on men and women could aid the reduction of poverty and inequality – the over-arching purpose for many international trade agreements.

[Can Trade Policies Promote Gender Equality?: Exploring the trade-growth-gender nexus](#) by Melanie Ramjoué ([ARTNeT Alerts on Emerging Policy Challenges](#), Issue 7, 2010) explores the relationship between gender equality and trade policies, by discussing two key questions: i) Does gender equality have a positive or negative effect on a country's growth and trade performance? And, ii) Does trade liberalization have positive or negative impacts on gender?

In answer to the first question, the author concludes that the effect of gender

equality on economic growth is positive for two key reasons: a) when women have greater access to employment, the workforce is increased and therefore the economic outputs of the country as a whole are increased; and b) higher educated and wealthier women are more likely than men to spend money on children's education and wellbeing, investing in the future work force. Trends across North-East and South-East Asia support the argument that women's labor is essential to high rates of economic growth.

Regarding question two, the author elicits a nuanced argument; the impact of trade liberalization on gender equality remains difficult to determine due to important distinctions between demographic groups and countries. Gender-differentiated impacts also depend on culturally specific factors including women's and men's access to inputs such as land, credits and training. The article does however, suggest that the impact of trade liberalization may differ on a gendered-basis hence, policy makers should formulate gender-sensitive policy with the inclusion of those affected.

[Contributed, with thanks, by Elizabeth Johnson, intern, UNDP APRC]

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

The 2011 Asia-Pacific Intensive Course on Gender and Macroeconomic Issues, July 3-16, 2011, Saitama, Japan

The [UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre \(APRC\)](#) and the [Institute for Gender Studies \(IGS\)](#) of Ochanomizu University are jointly organizing the second regional course on gender and macroeconomic issues at [National Women's Education Center](#), Saitama, Japan, July 3-16, 2011. This initiative is part of the UNDP APRC's regional capacity development project on gender and macroeconomic issues, with financial support from the Government of Japan through the UNDP-Japan Partnership Fund. The regional intensive course is conducted in partnership with the [International Working Group on Gender, Macroeconomics and International Economics \(GEM-IWG\)](#).

The course is intended for economists/practitioners in government such as Ministries of Finance, Industry, and Trade, National Planning Commissions, development agencies, civil society organizations, research institutes, and academia. The intensive course would seek to provide participants with knowledge and information on gender and macroeconomic issues such as trade and investment, budget, national statistics, migration, and economic crisis as well as tools and application methods for projects designed and executed at national and community levels. There would also be networking op-

portunities with experts in and outside of the region.

The fellows will be required, at a minimum, to have a master's degree in economics, development studies, or other related areas, or equivalent work experiences. The course will be conducted in English. Full funding will be provided for up to 30 fellows. The funding priority will be given to: a) a citizen of a developing country in [Asia and the Pacific in which the UNDP APRC serve](#); and b) those who are currently working for a gender and macroeconomic project in a developing country in the Asia-Pacific in which the UNDP APRC serves. Self-funded applicants and applicants with sponsorship from their employer or grants from other sources are welcome to apply. Residents in other regions are also welcome to apply on a self-financing basis.

For details on application and selection procedures, please download the Call for Applications from the [UNDP APRC project website](#). Please send the application form and other documents to 2011AP-course@undp.org. Applications are due by **February 21, 2011, 5pm, Bangkok time** (UTC/GMT +7 hours). For any questions, please write to: yumiko.yamamoto@undp.org

CALL FOR PAPERS

The IAFFE Conference, June 24-26, 2011, Zheijian Gongshang University, Hangzhou, China

The 2011 [IAFFE](#) (International Association for Feminist Economics) conference invites panel proposals and individual paper submissions on the theme of the conference as well as topics of interest to feminist economics. The theme of this year is: **Reorienting Economic Theory, Policies, and Institutions: Feminist perspectives in the aftermath of the global economic crisis.**

Proposals must be submitted on-line via the [IAFFE website](#). Participants are limited to one paper presentation each. The deadline for submissions is **March 1, 2011**. Those who plan to present a paper at the conference, and who come from countries with developing and transition economies, are encouraged to apply for travel grant funds offered by IAFFE. Funds are also available to a limited number of scholars and graduate students from OECD countries. Please check the [IAFFE website for Travel Grant application information](#) for more information.

Please check the [IAFFE Annual Conference website](#) for details on the conference venue [Zhejiang Gongshang University](#), air and ground transportation, accommodation, visa information, and pre-conference workshop.

About Us:

UNDP is the UN's global development network, an organization advocating for change and sharing knowledge, experience and resources worldwide to help people build a better life.

UNDP Regional Centre serves 36 countries in 24 country offices of Asia and the Pacific. A main priority of the Regional Centre is to provide [UNDP Country Offices](#) in the region with easy access to knowledge through high quality advisory services based on global applied research and UNDP lessons learnt. The second priority is to build partnerships and promote regional capacity building initiatives, which allow UNDP, governments and other development partners to identify, create and share knowledge relevant to solving urgent development challenges.

Asia-Pacific GEM, a quarterly newsletter, aims to bring news related to gender and macroeconomic issues in the region to government officials, development agencies, civil society, and academia. The next newsletter will be released in April 2011. Please send any relevant news items you would like to share – for example, announcements about upcoming events, calls for papers, conferences, workshops, training programmes, new publications and research papers on gender and macroeconomics, and association news – to [Yumiko Yamamoto](mailto:yumiko.yamamoto@undp.org) at UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre by **March 31, 2011**. The newsletter will be distributed electronically and posted on the UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre website.

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