

Summaries

Introduction: Sexuality Matters

Andrea Cornwall and Susie Jolly

This *IDS Bulletin* addresses a theme that mainstream development has persistently neglected: sexuality. Sex and sexuality have profound implications for development, and are intimately connected with every dimension of poverty. And nothing is more basic than our rights over our own bodies. Yet the sidelining of sexuality in development, its treatment either as a 'health issue' or as a 'luxury', has meant that far too little attention has been paid to its broader implications for human well-being. This *IDS Bulletin* seeks to show why sexuality matters. It argues that sexuality matters to people, and is an important part of most people's lives. Development policies and practices are already having a significant – and often negative – impact on sexuality. Societal norms that seek to contain and control sexuality have a significant and often highly negative impact on material as well as emotional well-being. Development needs to recognise the importance of sexuality, to move beyond the limits of negativity to a more positive and pleasure-focused approach, and to affirm our rights to bodily and sexual autonomy as fundamental. Contributors offer a wealth of inspirational examples of how this might be done.

Sexualities and Development: A Story in Pictures

Sonia Corréa

Current debates on sexuality and development need to be seen in relation to a longer historical cycle. This contribution provides a pictorial overview of the last three decades, laying out the diverse influences from the 1970s, which produced both the Washington Consensus and Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, through to the current paradoxes of the 1990s and 2000s, with advances in sexual rights struggles pitted against the rise in conservatism and fundamentalisms. This time line roots current sexual rights struggles in recent history, showing how the same themes resurface and gain new meanings over time. Throughout this history, how does development deal with sexuality? Development language regarding sexuality is far from transparent. Sexuality is never directly spoken about, yet it is here all the time. This is sharply illustrated by the population–development

discourse, which entirely avoids the issue of sexuality, as if it would be possible for fertility to occur in the absence of the sexual act. However, the opacity of language around sexuality is now being pierced by the sexual rights discourse. Possibilities for further progress can be created by taking a political economy perspective that addresses the interactions between sexuality and structures such as class, race and gender, and recognises sexuality as a source of well-being, entitlements and fulfilment.

Exploring Linkages Between Sexuality and Rights to Tackle Poverty

Henry Armas

Sexuality and sexual rights have generally been treated as secondary to the 'really important matters'. This article explores the linkages between sexual rights and other rights which *are* considered to be priorities in development, such as health, education and labour rights. This article does *not* argue that sexual rights are of equal importance to these other rights. Instead, it asserts that sexual rights *are* all these rights, in that sexuality and social norms surrounding it have huge impacts on health, education and work. The author cites evidence of female genital mutilation as well as 'symbolic mutilations' of women's desire, including shame and guilt, having direct effects on physical and mental health and well-being; feminine boys and pregnant girls being more likely to drop out of school due to bullying, social pressure and lack of support; and employers and colleagues discriminating against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people at work. Sexual rights are integral to other human rights. Pretending this is not the case will only weaken our broader rights strategies.

'Race', Culture, Power, Sex, Desire, Love: Writing in 'Men who have Sex with Men'

Andil Gosine

Many names are given to identities and practices that suggest or involve sexual activity between men: queer, gay, homosexual, dandy, batty man, queen, bachelor, fag, etc. In international development, however, 'men who have sex with men' (MSM) has fast become the preferred descriptor for the myriad expressions of

same sex desire by men. This term was originally proposed as an alternative to 'gay' or 'bisexual' by grassroots activists and healthcare workers concerned about the impact of sexually transmitted diseases in their communities. This was a radical gesture at the time, a sharp refusal of the dominant narratives about sexual orientation and sexual behaviour that were being relayed by organisations led by white, gay-identified men. However, the term has now been appropriated by the machinery of development, and its implications and effects have altered. MSM is now used as a catch-all category for non-Western and non-white men with same sex practices. It mimics Orientalist strategies of collapsing cultural differences between 'third world' people and marking them as 'other'. The focus is placed on physical interactions and potential for spreading disease, while love, emotions and desires are ignored.

Reclaiming Travesti Histories

Giuseppe Campuzano

In pre-colonial Peru the distinctions between male and female were far more flexible than they are today. A traditional *travesti* or transgender/transvestite identity and culture existed and played an important role in Andean religion and society. Colonial and subsequently development influences suppressed these identities and communities, although the Peruvian *travesti* remained. In contemporary Peru *travestis* face violence from the public and police, as well as economic exclusion and discrimination by health services. *Travestis* have assimilated the worst of both gender roles. Sometimes they are seen as male and thus fair game for violence from the police. However, they have also assumed some aspects of the stereotypical 'hysterical' woman, such as body transformation even at the cost of their health, choosing macho and possibly violent partners, and passivity in sex. *Travestis* need a new kind of post-feminism to enable them to make active choices about which genders they wish to claim, and to live out their chosen genders in ways that validate themselves. Rights are needed for all people to choose and transit between gender identities whether male, female, or a combination of the two.

Sexual Rights are Human Rights – But How Can We Convince the United Nations?

Kate Sheill

In 1995, sexual rights were articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action. Now, however, principles agreed many years ago are being deemed too radical

to be cited in new texts. In the face of these roll-backs, and at a time when activists are being silenced by funding restrictions, what possibility is there of progress? Drawing on examples from the Commission on Human Rights, the 49th Commission on the Status of Women (Beijing Plus Ten) and the Commission on Population and Development, this article examines the obstacles to progress, the challenges to and of maintaining the *status quo* and the opportunities we must seize if we are to realise the potential of sexual rights. We must not lose the hard-won gains from the International Conference on Population and Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and other fora. However neither can we stop there. Having spent so long on the defensive, we now need to move beyond a focus solely on negative, protectionist models and find ways to progress understanding and realisation of sexual rights. We need to build a new culture of sexuality that allows individuals to act with autonomy and take responsibility for their actions, and that promotes mutual respect as well as individual choice, expression and pleasure.

Developing Sexual Rights: Challenges and Trends in Latin America

Roger Raupp Rios

In recent years in Latin America, the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people have received greater institutional attention, and legislative gains have been made across the continent. Using a typology of legal frameworks, this article explores trends, challenges and prospects for advancing efforts to address discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in Latin America. It argues that deepening and adequately understanding LGBT rights and how they can be protected and promoted at multiple levels is an indispensable task for legal authorities, professionals and civil society. By proceeding in this direction, a fruitful dialogue can be established between law-making and jurisprudence, public policies, and civil society initiatives. This dynamic can help overcome an exclusionary and stigmatising culture in relation to LGBT, as well as resistance to freedom of sexual expression.

Reflections on the Language of Rights from a Queer Perspective

Jaya Sharma

The language of rights has been of great value to queer movements, particularly in the context of claim making *vis-à-vis* the state. There are however

significant limitations of the rights language that need to be recognised. This article focuses attention on these, drawing on the experience of PRISM (People for Rights of Indian Sexuality Minorities), a queer activist forum based in Delhi, India. The rights language pushes us into a limiting framework of identity politics. It also allows other progressive movements to offer their support from a 'safe' distance. A narrow use of the rights language runs the danger of maintaining the discourse of the *status quo*, offering escape routes from addressing more directly intersectionality, heteronormativity and its subservions. The article makes a case for rooting the rights language in queer/feminist politics in order to allow for a more transformatory engagement with sexuality.

Sodomy in India: Sex Crime or Human Right?

Sumit Baudh

There is a wide spectrum of sexual acts, practices and identities worldwide. The existing language of sexual rights has emerged largely in relation to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. In turn, this language seems to cater primarily to LGBT or similar such identities. Heterosexuals may be excluded, as well as indigenous same sex practising or transgender people who do not identify as LGBT, such as the *hijras* of South Asia. The challenge is to make human rights accessible to all. There is therefore a need to expand the human rights discourse beyond narrow notions of identities, to secure a firm foundation for sexual rights. The author takes the example of the British colonial law, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code 1860, which makes illegal 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature'. This law remains in force in India and is a source of constant human rights violations. Although a literal reading of the law does not explicitly condemn any particular sexual identity, homosexual or heterosexual, in effect it criminalises all forms of consensual same sex sexual activity. Due to its own lack of focus on identities, Section 377 is a fitting test case for a broader and newly proposed human right: the right to sexual autonomy.

The (Im)possibility of Child Sexual Rights in South African Children's Account of HIV/AIDS

Deevia Bhana

A key strategy in the fight against HIV/AIDS is to safeguard the rights of those who are infected and at risk of infection. However, because of the association with sexuality, the rights of children are

not often addressed and instead are represented as innocent and ignorant of sexuality and HIV/AIDS. This article challenges that representation, based on a study of seven and eight year-olds in a black township in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The researcher found that the children already knew a great deal and could talk to her comfortably about AIDS, sex and condoms. However, they had also learnt that they were not supposed to talk about such things in front of teachers or parents, or punishment might ensue. The article explores how children exercise, adjust and negotiate their knowledge of HIV/AIDS and of sexuality. It concludes with suggestions on the possibility of sexual rights in early childhood.

Small Powers, Little Choice: Contextualising Reproductive and Sexual Rights in Slums in Bangladesh

Sabina Faiz Rashid

How do young married women fare in an urban slum in Bangladesh? This article is based on in-depth ethnographic fieldwork among 153 married girls aged 15–19 in a Dhaka slum, carried out during December 2001–January 2003. The author finds a shift away from the traditional arranged marriage practice, with 81 of the 153 young women having 'love' marriages. Young women now have greater mobility and freedom to choose their own partners, but at the same time face greater instability in marital relations. The lived experiences of engaging in sexual relations with their spouses are fraught with contradictions. Without economic independence and social autonomy, many young women tolerate bad marriages, and unsafe and painful sex as a survival strategy. Some however have more leeway to set the terms of engagement, using their sexuality as a resource to attract their husbands and secure his material support, and may even enjoy doing so.

Sexuality and Women's Sexual Rights in the Gambia

Isatou Touray

Drawing on grassroots activism by the women's rights NGO GAMCOTRAP (Gambian Committee on Traditional Practices), this article considers contested forms of sexuality in the Gambia. Among these are polygamy, early marriage, sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, marital/statutory rape, forced retirement by spouse from sex due to menopause, trafficking in women, and lesbianism. Arguments relating to Gambian culture and Islam are central to

the contestations around these issues. For example, some men cite articles in the Koran as justifying polygamy, and many women accept this as their right. In fact, the Koran condones polygamy only where all wives are treated with equal justice, a condition it describes as impossible, thus monogamy can be inferred to be the recommended course of action. The reality is that many women suffer when their husbands take other wives. The author cites grievances, for example men's material contributions decrease, and they may also cease having sex with older wives leaving them unsatisfied but unable to leave the marriage or seek sex elsewhere due to social and economic constraints.

Sex and the Rights of Man

Alan Greig

What can men's interest be in the social and sexual revolution being proposed by advocates for sexual rights? The first answer to this question is to recognise that some men's sexual rights have long been violated. Those men who 'betray' their gender through their 'feminine' representation and/or sexual relations with other men are especially vulnerable to such violation. Violence maintains the gender and sexuality hierarchy by keeping the men 'who are not men enough' in their place. But what about the men who appear to be, or strive to be, 'man enough'? What can be said of their sexual rights? Perhaps the most basic demand of advocates for sexual rights is that people be free to live their sexual lives without coercion. Even men who do conform to stereotype may suffer sexual violence, as shown by figures on non-consensual heterosexual experience reported by boys and men. Furthermore, gender socialisation may inhibit men's ability to experience joy, dignity, autonomy and safety in their sexual lives. For example, gender socialisation dictates that men should be confident and take control in sexual relations, leaving no space for admission of the anxieties that many feel.

Eroticism, Sensuality and 'Women's Secrets' Among the Baganda

Sylvia Tamale

Talk of '*ensonga za Ssenga*' (*Ssenga* matters) among the Baganda people of Uganda signifies an institution that has endured through centuries as a tradition of sexual initiation. At the helm is the paternal (or surrogate) aunt whose role is to tutor young women in a range of sexual matters, including pre-menarche practices, pre-marriage preparation,

erotics and reproduction. In contemporary Uganda, commercial *Ssenga* services abound, with *Ssenga* columns and call-in radio programmes and *Ssenga* booklets for sale on Kampala's streets. The institution is being transformed by 'modernisation' and urbanisation, redrawing the boundaries of *Ssenga* to suit the times. This article suggests that while *Ssenga* facilitates and reinforces patriarchal power, at the same time it subverts and parodies patriarchy. Through a deconstruction of the arrangement of gender and sexuality in *Ssenga*, this article investigates constructs of Kiganda sexuality, and of femininity and masculinity within them.

Enhancing Sensuality for Safer Sex Among Men in India

Anupam Hazra

Stigma and legal sanctions against homosexuality, as well as gender norms among men who have sex with men (MSM), lead to an emphasis on aggression, power play and penetration in male-to-male sex in India. This in turn contributes to low levels of condom use among MSM and transgender people, and increases the risk of HIV and ill-health. This article explores the potential for promotion of more sensuous, pleasurable, and communicative sex which could also be safer. The article draws on the author's research as well as on his personal experience working as a masseur in massage parlours in Kolkata which provide commercial sexual services to male clients. Strategies are proposed for creating safer social and sexual spaces for MSM, including those working in the sex industry. The findings are being used to develop behaviour change communication (BCC) strategies and material to promote elements of sensuousness in male-to-male sex.

Putting the Sexy Back into Safer Sex: The Pleasure Project

Wendy Knerr and Anne Philpott

Pleasure – and even sex itself – have been noticeably absent from much of the dialogue surrounding sexually transmitted infections and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Safer sex and good sex are not mutually exclusive, yet most established educational programmes give the impression that they are, by using only fear of risk and disease to motivate their audience to practise safer sex. Yet evidence suggests that positive incentives provide the most effective way to get people to want to have safer sex. The Pleasure Project works with these incentives – pleasure and desire – to build bridges between the

pleasure/sex industry and the safer sex world. It avoids negativity, ensuring that erotic materials include examples of safer sex and that sexual health and training materials take account of pleasure. In this article, the authors give a brief account of some of the Pleasure Project's work and reflect on how a more sex-positive approach to safer sex can help promote greater sexual well-being.

Terms of Contact and Touching Change: Investigating Pleasure in an HIV Epidemic

Jill Lewis and Gill Gordon

Western-led discussions of sexual health have foregrounded warnings of the dangers of sex. Yet, pleasure is one important reason why people have sex. Sexual health work must open up discussion of how pleasure can be experienced with less risk. There are challenges in addressing pleasure in work on safer sex. Power structures such as gender, age, class and race, as well as the globalised media, influence how people experience pleasure. Safer sex and HIV prevention work thus need to take account of how pleasure is constructed, as well as the diversity in what people find pleasurable. Giving examples from the numerous safer sex trainings and community initiatives they themselves have facilitated, the authors show that such discussions of pleasure are possible in practice and indeed welcomed by many.

Promoting Sexual Rights Through Human Rights Education: Experiences at Grassroots in Turkey

Liz Ercevik Amado

Control of women's sexuality is the root cause of many women's human rights violations, such as 'honour' crimes, early and forced marriages and female genital mutilation. The Turkish organisation, Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways, contests this control of women's sexuality, taking an affirmative approach to sexuality to open up space for women to claim their rights. In 2004, WWHR led a campaign for reform of the Turkish penal code which resulted in over 30 amendments on sexual and bodily rights of women and girls in Turkey, including criminalisation of marital rape and removal of a provision granting sentence reductions for 'honour' killings. They have also run human rights trainings for over 4,500 women throughout Turkey which include a module on sexual rights promoting the idea that women have a right to sexual pleasure. Participants have reacted very positively to this module and found the discussions empowering.

'Man Hunt Intimacy: Man Clean Bathroom': Women, Sexual Pleasure, Gender Violence and HIV

Alice Welbourn

The spread of HIV is affected by a wide range of factors including household income, domestic divisions of labour, seasonal workloads and expenditure, communication, relationships, gender violence, and sexual pleasure or dissatisfaction. Drawing on material from North and South America and Africa, the author concludes that the links between these issues are both universally experienced and critical to HIV prevention and mitigation. The author also challenges the rejection of 'anecdote' in formal research settings, particularly when the stories told by women – and men – are so similar and so widespread. The Stepping Stones training methodology supports participants' own analyses of these links in their lives, and has enabled them to work out their own mutually agreeable solutions. The trainings have also created opportunities to learn about pleasure and develop closer, more loving, respectful and satisfying relationships whatever a person's HIV status.

Vagina Sisters, Crying Men, Soap Opera Stars and Sushi: The Story of the Vagina Monologues in Belgrade

Jelena Djordjevic

In spring 2006 the *Vagina Monologues* was staged in Serbia for the first time. Performed by well-known actresses, including a celebrity soap star, the show attracted a wide audience of people beyond those usually interested in the women's movement. Hundreds of young girls came to see the soap star, but at the same time they heard about pleasure and orgasm, and how to love their bodies, as well as about sexual abuse and domestic violence. Men in the audience cried with emotion. The actresses, some of whom had reacted with embarrassment and disdain when they first saw the script were on a real high by the end of the show. Serbia's Anti-Trafficking Center organised the event and all proceeds went to KOLO, a Bosnian women's organisation supporting women who had been raped by Serbian soldiers during the war in former Yugoslavia. The *Vagina Monologues* created amazing new connections and allies in the struggle for women's rights.

Sex Workers' Struggles in Bangladesh: Learning for the Women's Movement

Shireen Huq

In 1999 the government of Bangladesh forcefully evicted sex workers from a large cluster of brothels

just outside Dhaka. Members of the sex worker organisation, Ulka, immediately sought support from Naripokkho, a country-wide women's NGO. The Naripokkho office was transformed into an impromptu shelter with over 40 women sleeping there, and a few more staying with staff in their homes. This led to a new set of relationships and alliances between the sex workers and staff. Naripokkho and other Bangladeshi women's

organisations supported a campaign for the rights of the sex workers and their struggles to defend themselves against the illegal evictions. This article explores the lessons learnt by these organisations through their involvement. It suggests that these struggles gave a new and more public meaning to discussions on sexuality and sexual rights that had already been taking place within the women's movement.