



# Pathways of Women's Empowerment

## *Stories of Influence*

March 2015



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# 1 Background and Introduction

The Pathways of Women's Empowerment programme's aim since its inception in 2006 has been to learn what works in achieving positive change in women's lives by exploring the systemic conditions that shape opportunity and by learning from women's own stories on how empowerment can be experienced. The ambitious inter-disciplinary research and communications programme we designed, funded by the UK Department of International Development from 2006 to 2011 uncovered a range of key learnings across the themes of our research on work, voice and body. As a work stream under the Gender, Power and Sexuality programme funded by Sida over the last three years our aim has been to insert these findings into global policy and cultural processes on women's empowerment and thereby influence future thinking in this area.

The key ingredient to the success of the Pathways programme has been its members and how we have worked together. Pathways partners come from a range of academic disciplines but

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also have experience from across the spectrum of development. They have been or are now donors, activists, NGO staff, political officials and journalists. This extensive range of experience has produced the ability to engage within the academic and policy arenas in distinctive ways.

We have been able to make the most of these networks to enter spaces which might otherwise have been much more difficult to reach. In addition, through the programme, we have made new connections with professionals outside the development sphere which has allowed us to be more innovative in our thinking in terms of communicating policy messages, e.g. artists, filmmakers, photographers, storytellers, and curriculum developers.

Another essential element of the Pathways programme has been its way of working. The Pathways programme was constructed to be

horizontal in terms of decision making, planning and budgeting processes with representatives from each regional hub on the management board. The aim of the structure was to build a community of trust and solidarity within the network. Although having horizontal decision-making processes could initially be challenging in terms of efficacy, for the longer-term this has been an important element in building a much stronger, mutually supportive and enduring network based on trust (see Kabeer and Huq 2014 for the importance of relationships in social mobilisation organisations).

An important aspect of the support has been the capacity building within the programme. There has been a mutual sharing of knowledge and encouragement which has resulted in a legacy of researchers who have been exposed to new methodologies and disciplines and institutions have been strengthened in terms of gender teaching and conveying gender research. For example, the Pathways Bangladesh team's experience of the Changing Images of Women photography exhibition links into their current work around Images of Caring Men which is part of the 'Making Unpaid Care Work more Visible in Public Policy' stream of the Gender, Power and Sexuality Programme (see Azim and Rahim 2009; BDI no date).

The approach to Pathways' internal structures is driven by our external approach to change - this emphasises the importance of change from within as well as from without. As John Gaventa notes for change to happen both sides of the equation need to be worked on 'creating responsive and accountable public institutions and enhancing the capacity of citizens to recognise and claim their rights' (2004). In the example of Pathways this has meant not only building members' capacity but also ensuring democratic processes were in place to jointly agree on our vision. For our work this has meant not only looking at what enabling structures need to be in place for women to live more empowered lives, but also exploring in what ways we can effect a change in consciousness for individuals' to have a belief in their entitlement to claim their rights.

## 2 Theory of Change

Change is not linear, it's bumpy and circuitous. The unexpected can sometimes thrust things forward or often set things back.

In the case of gender equity, currently religious fundamentalism is a real risk, but also disasters and tragedies such as the unanticipated ebola epidemic take their toll. Even more positive innovations such as social media can be both enabling and disabling for instance in terms of online abuse directed towards feminist activists. This emphasises the importance of building on gains made and guarding against retrenchment. Change is a long-term project, which is why Pathways sees education development as a key strand of our work. All of our partners have included Pathways research within their Masters programmes and have developed modules influenced by the programme's findings. In addition to this we have developed a Pathways learning hub to provide curriculum resources to pupils from ages 11 up to 18, with other material adapted for use in training and for universities. Our aim is to influence understandings of gender equality within the classroom and to challenge stereotypes from an early age.

Our theory of change involves three interlinking strands. The first overarching strand is that for change to happen it needs not only structures to change but for the creation of a critical consciousness – a shift in what is possible and in new norms for women both individually and within society. The second strand moves on from that and is the importance of working outside the 'usual suspects' of academic and development interaction, to work with media professionals and the arts industry to help create these new narratives and visions of what works and what can work for women. The third is the importance of women's organising at both grassroots level but also within global policy to create change. These three strands are all closely woven together in our work.

### 2.1 Creating Critical Consciousness

One of the key issues raised by the Pathways programme's research is that facilitating positive change in women's lives is not possible without

changing the underlying structures of constraint. These underlying structures of constraint include not only cultural and social norms which validate the unjust and unequal treatment of women – norms visibilised and represented through mechanisms such as restrictive laws, unequal pay and conditions, stereotypical representations of women in the media, etc – but also include limits to the horizons of possibility or sense of entitlement that are internalised by women themselves. The Pathways premise is that whilst policy interventions such as micro-credit, quotas for women, legal reform etc are important in themselves, they cannot create lasting sustainable change unless they are backed up by

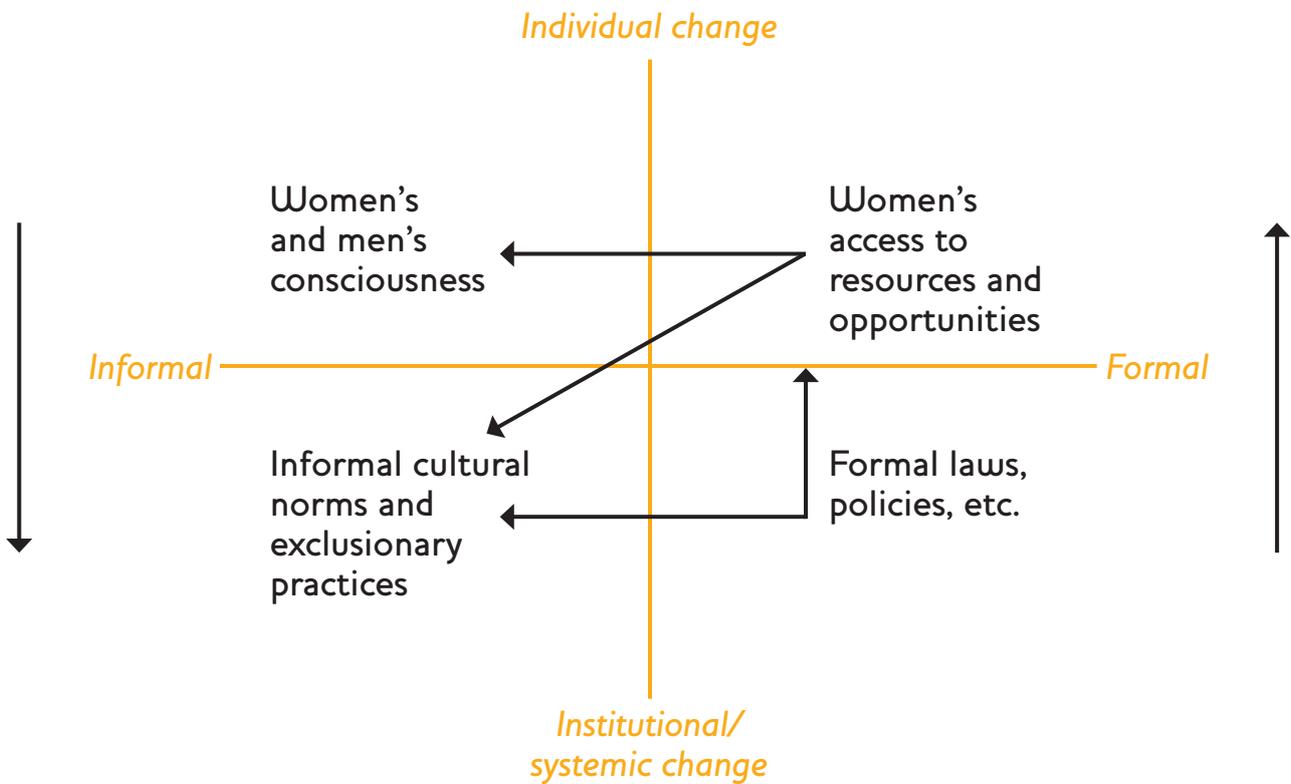
changes in the disabling environments in which women live. This is a point Hania Sholkamy makes in an article on power and politics in the Arab context: 'Alleviating poverty and enabling women to make some income can better lives, but the enabling environment that confirms the right to work, to property, to safety, to voice, to sexuality and to freedom is not created by sewing machines or micro-credit alone' (Sholkamy 2010).

Expanding women's horizons of possibility requires the development of a critical consciousness (Freire 1970). It means facilitating women's awareness of their rights and fostering their capabilities. In other words, encouraging 'women to question their subordinate status in society and to demand recognition of their status as human beings' (Kabeer 2013: 6). In exploring the internal transformations needed to create this critical consciousness the Pathways programme draws on the Gender at Work framework (see Figure 1 over page).

This framework produced by David Kelleher and Aruna Rao (no date) suggests that in order for positive changes in gender equality to happen there needs to be both changes in institutions and

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**Figure 1** What are we trying to change?



organisations. Their understanding of institutions is 'the rules for achieving social or economic ends' (*ibid*: 1), i.e. values and norms which are both internalised and explicit. The left side of their framework focuses on the informal, both individual consciousness and systemic practices and the right side focuses on the formal, at the individual level women's access to resources, and at the organisational level changes to formal laws and policies. Their argument is that these four spheres

are linked and change in one relates to change in another.

In Pathways we see working on the left side of the Gender at Work framework as an important step in effecting change on the right side and much of our work has focused on this area. For instance an important element of the feminist cash transfer

programme we provided support for in Egypt was that it should facilitate poor women seeing themselves as citizens and taking an active part in

normal societal structures – an example of this was bankersing payments allowing women access to bank accounts for the first time and more control of their own money (Sholkamy 2014). In Brazil in working with the National Federation of Domestic Workers (FENATRAD) to analyse their strategies of mobilisation we supported a photography-training workshop for the domestic workers and a photography project to document their lives. This project had a transformative effect and helped create 'critical consciousness' for the women. For example, Maria de Fatima (30 years) reflected 'I felt I grew a lot because I learnt how to look more closely at my everyday life'. The resulting photos made a powerful statement to society prompting debate and reflection through their exhibition in an elite art gallery (see Cornwall and Sardenberg 2014). As Cornwall and Sardenberg (2014: 6) note: 'New knowledge generated by this process re-focused the attention of the movement on long-standing issues of sexual harassment and abuse, and affirmed the importance of professionalisation as a pathway to rights and recognition'.

The challenge, however, is that this kind of change is more difficult and complex to effect. Changing entrenched attitudes and structures is not an easy win. Neither is support guaranteed from across

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all women – danger lies in succumbing to the myth of sisterhood. Not all women see gender equality in the same way or even support it and this can hamper attempts at change. This is why recognising and emphasising the importance of women's relationships and support networks is essential – harnessing help where possible - including thinking about men and boys and not just women and girls. Pathways has approached this challenge by engaging with the media, culture and policy and taking what opportunity we can to repeat our message across these spheres in as many ways as possible in an attempt to influence these spaces (see for instance Cornwall 2014; Edwards 2014, *The Guardian*; Tadros 2012, 2014, *The Guardian*). We have been ambitious in our approach and the audience we want to reach but this stems from our fundamental belief in the need to challenge deep inequitable structures and to widen possibilities through challenging stereotypes and bringing about a rise in critical consciousness in order to achieve long-term sustaining change.

## 2.2 Working with 'Unusual Suspects'

From the beginning of the Pathways programme we had an ambition to reach as wide an audience as possible with our work. In our first stakeholder mapping meeting we had suggested the general public but was told that was too ambitious. In working with 'unusual suspects', however, we have been able to reach far wider audiences than we could have hoped for working just through the narrower channels of academic and development interaction. These 'unusual' suspects have included: filmmakers, photographers, artists, music professionals and school curriculum professionals. One of the key moments in our communications strategy was in deciding to employ a dedicated communications manager. The candidate selected, Tessa Lewin, had links to both the development and arts worlds and was able to draw on her networks within the arts to put together exciting ideas such as the Real World film scheme helping us to create more imaginative projects and to put key issues and messages across in far more creative ways than before. Getting researchers to work with arts professionals gave them space to reflect on what their work meant and helped present it in clearer more accessible ways for a public not immersed in development jargon.

There can, however, be risks and challenges in working with 'unusual suspects'. For instance, there was initially a gap between how some of the filmmakers and the researchers perceived

the issues which were to be explored and there was a balance that needed to be reached in terms of conveying the complexity of the issues against the need for a simple, clear narrative. The Communications Manager spent a lot of time in negotiation to reach a place where both the researchers were happy with what was being conveyed and the artists were satisfied with the story being told. As well as the Communications Manager playing an essential role in mediating these relationships, the risk was also mitigated by the filmmakers being able to work directly with Pathways researchers and getting privileged access to local experts and research participants which was something they wouldn't normally easily have as independent filmmakers.

Another risk is that in working with independent filmmakers you lose some control in terms of how research is articulated. The relationships of trust that were built between filmmaker and researcher were essential in this respect.

A critique that could be levelled at the Real World scheme is that we were using filmmakers from the global north who were not local to the research. Ideally we would want to use local filmmakers, but for Real World we had an opportunity to partner with Screen South, formerly part of the disbanded UK Film Council, who brought with them networks and links to exhibition opportunities which far exceeded any we could have achieved independently. Part of the rules of the Screen South association was that selected filmmakers should come from the southern England region. We hope, however, to have left a legacy of independent filmmakers who have been influenced by the Pathways approach to women's empowerment and in some cases have gone on to produce further development films with a more nuanced approach to the issues.

We believe that incorporating research with creative communications has been an important method of influencing change. Firstly, it has changed the researchers' perceptions of what can be achieved through communications, some were initially hesitant about using visual methodologies having been used to more traditional routes of

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dissemination through academic papers and articles at the end of projects, but they came to fully embrace it and creative communications were integrated throughout the programme. Secondly, it has helped influence a cadre of arts professionals who we hope in turn will influence others throughout their industry with their work. It has helped them reflect on the kinds of messages they convey in their work – particularly within

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development. Kat Mansoor from Animal Monday, one of the first filmmakers to be involved in the Real World scheme commented at the Pathways Beyond 2015 conference: ‘I didn’t know anything about women’s empowerment apart from what I lived and I had specific perceptions and I learnt a

hell of a lot from Andrea and it has shifted how I see a lot of things’. Finally, it has helped us to begin to fulfil our initial goal of reaching a general public. The films created through the Real World project have been shown at numerous film festivals all over the globe, photographs taken in all the Pathways regional hubs have been shown at a multitude of exhibitions and in our most recent major project our research findings and creative products have been repurposed for education and are being piloted in an increasing number of classrooms as a new educational resource.

### 2.3 The Importance of Women’s Organising and Networking for Change

The importance of women’s movements and organisations in mobilising for women’s rights is emphasised in much of feminist writing. The Gender at Work framework argues that change happens in a large part as a ‘result of the actions of organizations’ (Kelleher and Rao no date: 1). Naila Kabeer also notes how effective women’s organisations have been in being a force for change on the issue of violence against women (Kabeer 2013: 3). This point is well known but it needs reiterating and reinforcing and was one of the key messages in Pathways’ report to the Department for International Development in the UK, DFID in 2011, *Empowerment: A Journey Not a Destination* (Pathways 2011). Much of our research has looked into the effectiveness of women’s organising and what works and what doesn’t.

In Bangladesh, Sohela Nazneen and Maheen Sultan worked with three national women’s organisations

to explore the different strategies they used to become an effective voice for women’s interests. This included how they worked with political parties, the state and civil society. In Sierra Leone, Hussainatu Abdullah worked closely with the women’s groups campaigning for a minimum 30% quota to be set for women in the Sierra Leonean parliament, this led to the production of the Real World 30%: Women and Politics in Sierra Leone film which the women’s groups have subsequently used in their campaigning. With her project on feminist bureaucrats, Rosalind Eyben explored how women in donor and policymaking organisations negotiate their relationships with women’s organisations and work with them in promoting a feminist discourse.

Our strategy has come from a recognition of the role women’s organising plays in bringing about change as Anne-Marie Goetz notes:

In a bureaucracy you are encouraged to think that the way you change policy is through rational argument and good data. But everybody knows, and certainly feminists argue, that the way you change policy and practice is through political power. In the long run, the only thing that is going to change international policy is the strength of the domestic women’s movement in any specific country, and that change coming through that country to the international arena. Strong women’s movements shape what national representatives do and say in the UN. Without this, which is exactly the situation in many conflict zones where women’s movements are decimated or dispersed, all we have is reasoned arguments and solid data. What we really need to do is invest in domestic women’s movements, but the timetable of stopping violence often precludes that. (Hudson and Goetz 2014: 34)

We have consistently repeated this message in our writing and have also worked to amplify women’s voices where possible and the positioning of Pathways members has aided this. Pathways Latin America Brazilian members, for example, are academics and activists and are organisers of the national observatory monitoring the application of Brazil’s domestic violence law. They have also worked closely with FENATRAD, the union of women domestic workers and are part of the Brazilian feminist movement’s political lobby known as the ‘lipstick lobby’. In Egypt, Mariz Tadros has been working with feminist activists mobilising around the Egyptian revolutions and has been drawing attention via both visual and written media to the issue of politically motivated sexual violence enacted during demonstrations (see Tadros 2013a, 2013b, 2013c).



▲ Image from *30%: Women in Politics in Sierra Leone*, animated by Emily Cooper.

## 3 Stories of Change

Goal: Influencing global policy and programming – Pathways work referred to in policy debates. Academics from the Global South are published and their perspectives made more visible. Expose new areas of work that break mainstream conventional approaches. Challenging conventional paradigms.

### 3.1 Real World: *30% Women and Politics in Sierra Leone*

The Real World film scheme was set up by the Pathways of Women's Empowerment programme in cooperation with Screen South, a creative development agency based in the south east of England, and formerly within the UK Film Council. The scheme was managed by Tessa Lewin, Pathways Communications Manager, and its aim was to link talented young

documentary filmmakers with academics from Pathways to collaborate on a series of short films broadly exploring concepts around women's empowerment. The nature of the co-funding arrangement with Screen South meant that the filmmakers who applied for the scheme had to be from the southeast England area. The scheme, however, offered an opportunity for these filmmakers from the Global North to work with researchers from the Global South and to listen to their perspective on issues and interact in ways they had never previously been able to

and hopefully shape the filmmakers' thinking about development issues and influence others in their thinking. For the researchers it gave them an opportunity to reflect on what their work meant

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and think about it from a different perspective in terms of the messages they wanted to give out to a non-development audience. By doing this we hoped to create more nuanced development stories that maintained both a strong narrative arc, and high production values; films that could engage audiences beyond the development industry.

The first three films under the scheme – *A Vida Politica*, *Thorns and Silk* and *Khul*

were undertaken whilst Pathways was a research programme consortium funded by UK Department for International Development. They were very well received and were shown internationally at a range of film festivals including:

- Luna Fest, USA travelling festival
- South by South West, Texas, USA
- Henley International Film Festival, UK
- Guardian Hay Festival, UK

One of the key lessons from our first experiences of the scheme was not to underestimate the time needed to develop the relationship between the researchers and the film crew in order to build an understanding of the issues at stake. In fact for one of the first films, *A Vida Politica*, Pathways Director, Andrea Cornwall travelled with Kat Mansoor, the Director of the film, to the research locations to explain the nuances of the findings and to avoid the pitfalls of falling into easy stereotyping. Kat commented that she found this really useful and learnt a lot from Andrea and it shifted her thinking on women's empowerment issues which in turn influenced her subsequent films. We took all this learning into the last Real World film: *30%: Women and Politics in Sierra Leone* which is the subject of this story of change.

*30%: Women and Politics in Sierra Leone* is directed by Anna Cady and Emily Cooper and focuses on the Sierra Leonean women's movement's campaign for increased participation for women in Sierra Leone politics and their aim to achieve legislation for a minimum 30% quota. The film

explores this issue through the stories of Dr Bernadette Lahai of the Sierra Leone People's Party, Barbara Bangura, National Coordinator of the Women's Solidarity Support Group, and Salamatu Kamara, a prospective parliamentary candidate. The film was made in 2011 jointly funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway.

Time was still an issue in the making of this film, and the Director, Anna Cady, remarked that it was challenging to make the film in the time available – the team had two weeks in Sierra Leone to work with Bernadette, Barbara and Salamatu doing interviews and filming. If the team had had more time they would have liked to explore the women's stories in more detail, although the filmmakers were clear that their approach was listening to the women and being guided by them on what they wanted to get across. Again it took a lot of time both from Hussainatu Abdullah, the researcher, and Tessa Lewin to work with the filmmakers to produce the film. Anna Cady commented that 'Tessa was an important formative part of it and without her it wouldn't have taken the form that it did'. Ultimately the time spent has been worthwhile as the film has been very well-received.

The key to the success of the film is based in our theory of change in working with 'unusual suspects'. As Neelam Hussain from Simorgh commented 'The message is not new but the way it is done brings the message home'. The demand for quotas to get more women into politics is a familiar plea, but what makes this film far more powerful and connects it to more people is its use of animation. It is the co-working between researchers who are able to provide nuanced arguments and arts professionals who insert a fresh take on development that helps to make the film succeed as Anna says 'to engage with people who wouldn't normally listen'. Anne-Marie Goetz notes in a recent article with Natalie Florea Hudson that: 'The most powerful tool for changing hearts and minds is, first, direct exposure to women who have experienced violence and conflict, and second, clever media work that brings women's experience of conflict to life for policymakers ... It is critical to expose policymakers to an alternative perspective, which is most effective when there is an emotional element. Policymakers have to feel differently in order act differently' (Hudson and Goetz 2014: 341-2).

*30%: Women and Politics in Sierra Leone* has been

more successful than any of the previous Real World films in capturing the imaginations of audiences and this is most probably due to its stunning visuals and simple story. Comments from Vimeo where it was selected for staff picks in November 2013, include: '...a story brilliantly told and the art work is simply fantastic...', 'great animation, great story. A mini-documentary that will be very empowering to not only women of Sierra Leone, but possibly women in other countries as well', 'very intriguing, visually and conceptually'. However, the success is also due to the groundwork done in building up the relationships between researchers and filmmakers to carefully think through the story being told.

The fact that the film was successful in getting selected for the USA's largest and most influential film festival – the Sundance Film Festival in Utah – was really significant in increasing its impact. 30%: *Women and Politics in Sierra Leone* was one of only 65 short films out of a total of 8,102 submissions successful in connecting with the selection panel in order to be chosen for screening. Since that screening it has been selected for Vimeo staff picks (as mentioned above) which resulted in 141,672 downloads (when it was initially selected it was having 1,000 views an hour). It has been picked up by *The Atlantic* online news journal, the *Guardian*, and was shown over summer 2014 at a large screen at Canary Wharf underground station as part of Art on the Underground. Other film festivals it has been shown at include:

- Sundance Film Festival, USA
- Mecal Short Film Festival, Barcelona, Spain
- Opin Yu Yi, Sierra Leone Human Rights Film Festival, Freetown
- Melbourne Human Rights Film Festival
- Twin Cities Black Film Festival, Minneapolis, USA
- Flying Broom, Ankara, Turkey
- Real Film Festival, Newcastle, Sydney, Australia
- I Will Tell Film Festival, London
- Film Brothers Productions, Wilmington, Delaware, USA
- Montreal Black Film Festival, Canada
- Milwaukee Film Festival, USA
- Cinema et Droits Humains, Amnesty, Paris, France
- Underwire, London, UK
- Carrefour du Cinéma d'Animation, Paris, France

- London Feminist Film Festival
- European Film Festival, Seville, Spain
- Babylon, Berlin Feminist Film Week, Germany
- Luxor African Film Festival, Luxor, Egypt
- Athena Film Festival, New York, USA
- Southampton Film Week, UK
- Berkshire Conference of Women's History, Toronto, Canada

In terms of showing the film within policy and development circles, *Women and Politics in Sierra Leone* was shown as part of a joint Pathways/UN Women event at the Commission on the Status of Women annual meeting in New York in 2013. The event was held within the UN building and the focus was on women's economic, political and bodily empowerment. The film was also shown at an event on 'Women in Government and Politics: Increasing the Numbers. Access. Progress' held in November 2013 at the Central Hall of the Houses of Parliament. At this event, the film was exhibited by Nigerian representatives, who had approached us for permission after finding it on the internet. The Houses of Parliament event was attended by MPs from East Dunbartonshire, Walthamstow and South West Norfolk.

We were also approached by UNESCO for permission to use the film as part of their new report site on gender equality and culture and it features there as an example of good practice, alongside an interview with Yaba Badoe, a Ghanaian/British filmmaker with whom we have also partnered to make a film called *Honourables*, on the experiences of women district councillors in Ghana. Finally, most recently *Women and Politics in Sierra Leone* has been shown during a debate on the deliberately provoking proposition 'What if Women Ruled the World?' held at the Brighton Fringe Festival in May. The debating panel included Caroline Lucas, Green MP for Brighton, Melissa Leach, Director of IDS, Andrea Cornwall, Director of Pathways, and Ifrah and Muna Hassan, outreach workers from Integrate, Bristol, UK who campaign against all forms of violence and abuse against women.

As part of our aim of making change happen through supporting women's organising, we provided over 100 copies of the film to the 50/50 Group in Sierra Leone via Aisha Ibrahim, their President. The 50/50 Group is a non-partisan organisation, advocating and campaigning for an increased political participation and equal representation of women in decision-making

processes and initiatives at all levels in Sierra Leone. Currently they are working to influence the Constitution Review Process in Sierra Leone and the 30% quota is one of the things they are encouraging women to ask for in their submissions to the Constitution Review Committee. Aisha reported that:

The DVDs were distributed to Community Support Organisations across the country (at least 35) and they were encouraged to show them during trainings for the Constitution Review Process in their communities of operation. The 50/50 Group have used the DVD in over 30 trainings nationwide on “what women want in the new constitution”.

Events at which the film was shown include a consultation organised in Makeni by the Campaign for Good Governance at which women from a

range of sectors including agriculture, medicine, the forces, education, business, and from regions across the country were represented, and an event for the National Democracy Institute in Freetown. One challenge that has hampered the showing of the film in more remote locations in Sierra Leone is the

lack of electricity. The 50/50 Group also wanted to show the film on national TV but lack of funds was an issue as the national broadcaster refused to show it for free.

The demand for a 30 percent quota for women in the Sierra Leonean parliament to be enshrined in the constitution has now been put forward as a position paper to the Constitution Review Committee. The committee was due to conclude

in March 2015. However, the devastation caused by the ebola crisis has hampered progress.

*30%: Women in Politics in Sierra Leone* is a clear example of how the three strands of Pathways' theory of change have worked together to create a powerful product with a clear storyline which touches emotions and has engaged audiences across the world – helping to develop ‘a critical consciousness’. Following its selection for Vimeo, Barbara Bangura commented that she was so surprised and ‘so excited when [her] niece from Australia contacted [her] about it and asking what she should do to help’. The reach and spread of the film has been way beyond any expectations we had when it was first developed. As Neelam Hussain notes ‘it is aesthetically very pleasing and is a very powerful mix of emotional and informative and mixing media techniques’.

On the back of its success being able to bring the film back to the women's organisations in Sierra Leone to help provide support in influencing the Constitutional Review Process has been a very significant accomplishment. We have been able to reach our goal of visibilising these issues to a wider public and to challenge attitudes around women's roles, as well as using the film as a tool within policy dialogue. However, as the Ebola crisis demonstrates, unexpected shocks can set back progress and positive change. It will be incredibly disheartening if the work the women in Sierra Leone have done in mobilising for the quota is set back again by this devastating disease, and another example of how women are often the hit disproportionately hard in crises, both in the most obvious ways such as health, care and finance, but also in ways that have repercussions in other areas of their lives.

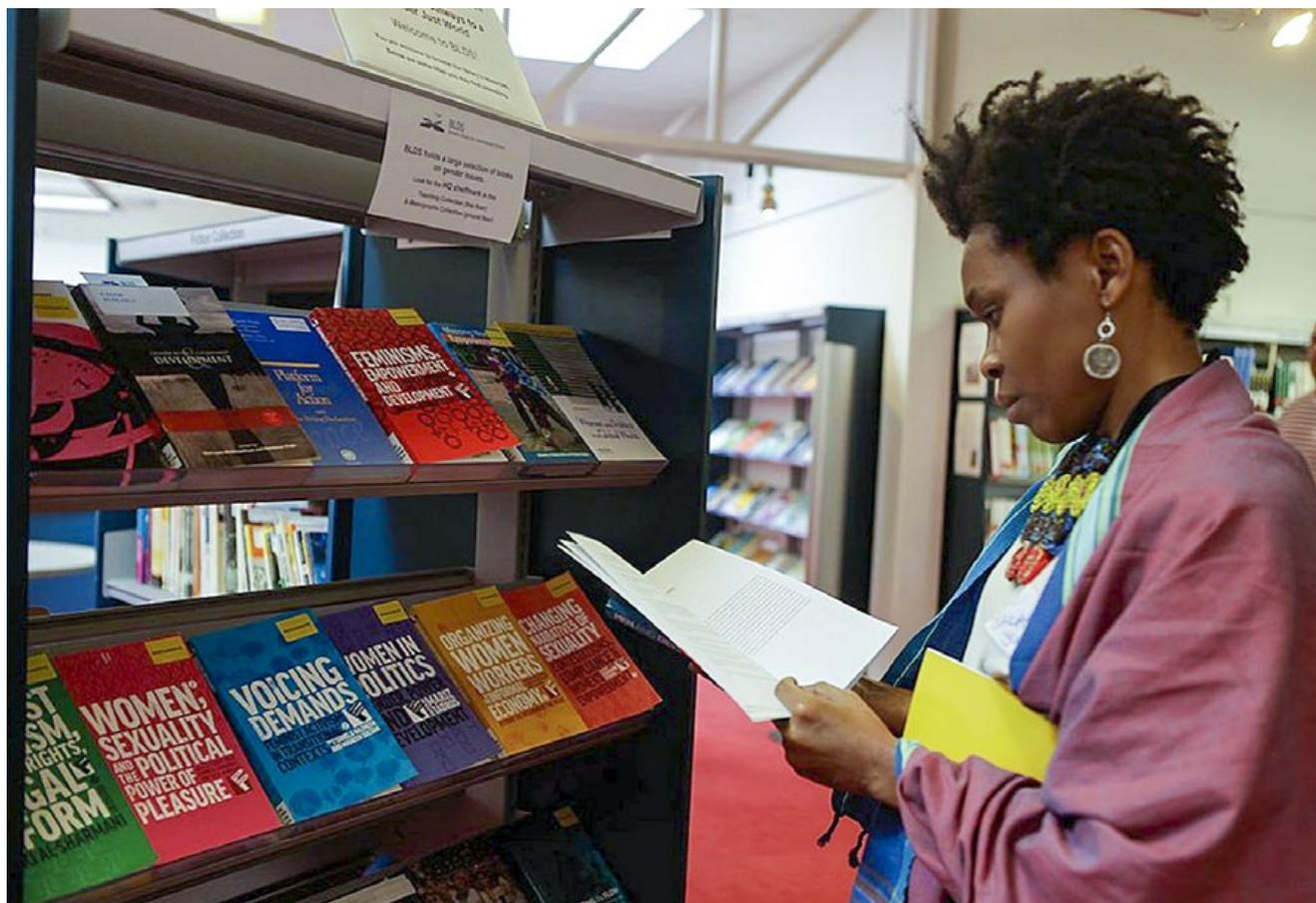
“The reach and spread of the film has been way beyond any expectations we had when it was first developed.”

## 3.2 Feminisms and Development: Pathways Book Series

**Goal: Influencing global policy and programming – Pathways work referred to in policy debates. Academics from the Global South are published and their perspectives made more visible. Expose new areas of work that break mainstream conventional approaches. Challenging conventional paradigms.**

The aim of the Pathways book series on Feminism and Development published by Zed Books is to provide a lasting legacy of Pathways research and to promote the Pathways findings. The books include editions on women and sexuality,

organising women workers, legal reform, women's organising and activism, narratives of sexuality, women and politics and an overarching edition that explores how women's empowerment is conceptualised. The books include chapters



on most of the main aspects of the Pathways research. There is also an additional book, published by Practical Action and edited by Rosalind Eyben and Laura Turquet (from UN Women), on *Feminists in Development Organizations* that looks at the tactics and strategies employed by feminist bureaucrats in negotiating for women's rights in large development agencies.

The books are intended for a much more narrow development focused audience than our audio visual products like the Real World films, but their intention is to add to and influence existing debates on women's empowerment and to provide a resource for years to come. As they have just been published in the last year it is still too early to analyse impact, but three of the books: *Women and Sexuality: The Political Power of Pleasure*, *Voicing Demands: Feminist Activism in Transitional Contexts*, and *Feminisms, Empowerment and Development: Changing Women's Lives* have already been recommended by *The Guardian* as significant development readers. *Women in Politics: Gender, Power and Development*, edited by Mariz Tadros which was published in May this year has already sold more than 350 copies and was recommended by *The Guardian* as a development studies book for students to read. Mariz Tadros was invited to the

UK Department for International Development annual review day and asked to talk about her work on politics. Thus the books provide empirical substance in order to engage in policy spaces.

The books have been widely distributed within UN Women and with the Progress of the World's Women Report Team. They are likely to be referenced within the forthcoming Progress of the World's Women report due to be published at the end of March 2015, they are also beginning to be referenced in journal articles and reports, including an ODI report on Progress on Women's Empowerment.

UN Women are drawing on findings from the Egyptian conditional cash transfers (CCTs) project managed by Pathways Middle East convenor, Hania Sholkamy (Sholkamy 2014) for the Progress of the World's Women report. The edition is on women's economic and social rights, with a particular focus on women's right to social security and the CCTs project is to be

▲ Beyond 2015: Pathways to a Gender Just World conference, Matters of the Earth.

“The aim of the Pathways book series on Feminism and Development published by Zed Books is to provide a lasting legacy of Pathways research.”

included as a case study opening a chapter about how feminist activism has brought about change within social protection, challenging the structures of constraint.

The CCTs programme introduced in Ain el-Sira, Cairo in 2009 was one of the first of its kind to be launched in the Arab world and was shaped by

“The programme had an explicitly feminist design that tried to take into account gender critiques of other CCT schemes.”

a Pathways conference which brought together experts from Brazil, Mexico and Ecuador. The programme had an explicitly feminist design that tried to take into account gender critiques of other CCT schemes. For example, while the female heads of household received the cash transfer and were responsible for the fulfilment of programme conditions, emphasis was placed on other

interventions to alleviate burdens placed on them, so that they were compensated for any time spent fulfilling programme conditions, and the programme promoted a sense of citizenship with female beneficiaries that was central to the scheme.

For Progress, UN Women are looking for stories that exemplify progressive change, but also want to highlight the different ‘pathways’ for achieving that change and the different types of actors that are involved (feminist researchers, policymakers, activists etc). The CCT programme in Ain el-Sira that Hania Sholkamy pioneered appealed to UN Women as a case study, not only because of the content of the programme and the ways in which it was designed with women’s rights at the centre, but also because of the way that it came about – bringing in ideas from the Brazilian context, the framing of the policy so that it was acceptable to

“A lot of what Pathways has done has been the foundation of what we have been learning for the last nine months.”

government and families, but also transformative for women.

UN Women will also be drawing on Pathways’ study of the Chapeu de Palha scheme in Brazil. This innovative training programme offers female sugar cane workers in north-eastern Brazil training in non-traditional jobs like welding, soldering, electrical work and taxi driving, using the

time between the harvests to change women’s prospects, with transformational effects. Pathways produced a film from the study in 2012, *A Quiet Revolution*, which has been shown to UN Women. The Progress team found the Chapeu de Palha

scheme interesting for two reasons: firstly the content of the programme which goes far beyond the usual women’s economic empowerment approach to challenge stereotypes, address rural women’s poverty, and bring about transformative change; and secondly, because a feminist bureaucrat has been so instrumental in designing and implementing the programme. Cristina Buarque, the Pernambuco State Secretary for Women’s Policies, who is behind the programme was recognised by the UN with a first prize for excellence in gender-sensitive public service delivery (IDS 2012).

UN Women have already connected with Pathways research on work in producing a significant report on findings from the Pathways survey work that was edited by Naila Kabeer with others from the Empowering Work Theme. *Paid Work, Women’s Empowerment and Inclusive Growth* draws on the household survey data collected by Pathways in Egypt, Ghana and Bangladesh and provides insights into the ‘resource’ pathways that enhance women’s agency and thereby contribute to the inclusiveness of the economic growth process.

The books have been successful in terms of being entry points into policy spaces and combined with our audio visual products has given the Pathways programme increased exposure. At a recent book launch for *Feminists in Development Organizations* which was held at UN Women, with around 100 people attending, one participant from another UN agency said ‘since UN Women was founded this is the kind of space for debate we hoped would be created and this is the first time it has happened’. Our hope is that the books can continue to facilitate these kinds of debates.

Beyond having an influence on post-2015 debates on enhancing women’s empowerment through their being cited in significant reports and included in debates, the hope for the books is that they will continue to influence new generations of policy makers through being a resource for education. The aim is that they will make students think differently about context, about understanding women’s lived realities, about what constitutes women’s empowerment. A University of Sussex Masters student at the Pathways conference on Beyond 2015 held in May at the Institute of Development Studies (Hawkins and Edwards 2014), commented: ‘A lot of what Pathways has done has been the foundation of what we have been learning for the last nine months’. This lasting legacy leads us on to the next story of change, the Pathways Learning Platform.

### 3.3 Pathways Learning Platform

**Goal: Challenging stereotypes – offering students a wider perspective of women’s realities. Influencing the development education curriculum.**

One aim of the Pathways programme has been to influence gender teaching and provide new resources for students. We believe influencing students is an important opportunity for future change as in a learning environment the new generation of thinkers are more open to hearing different points of view. The Pathways Learning Platform website was developed with this in mind, initially aimed at school age children, it was further developed to include graduate students and can be adapted for use in wider training situations. It helps fill a resource gap in teaching on development issues to children aged 11-18. Many of the educational resources up to now have covered broader subjects such as micro credit, but by repurposing Pathways research and research products such as the book series we have been able to develop much more inspiring and nuanced resource materials around issues of women’s empowerment and gender equity.

The success behind the platform is the same theory behind *30%: Women and Politics in Sierra Leone*, working with ‘unusual suspects’. For the platform we linked up with a former secondary school teacher, Natalie Jeffers, who is a specialist in developing curriculum materials. She was able to take the Pathways research and findings and work with it to fit into the specifications for various syllabuses including Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 in UK secondary schools and the International Baccalaureate. The adaptation was a long and challenging process in terms of the nuancing of the research, but putting this in an easily accessible and jargon-free language. This challenge was similar to the one faced with the *Real World* film and in a similar approach, Natalie interviewed researchers to get their perspective on the research and immersed herself within the programme’s studies.

The platform is a free resource designed to engage learners, enhance teaching and save time on lesson or workshop planning and resources preparation. The unique platform is important



for all learners, as the materials within it give value to the stories of women embarking on personal journeys of empowerment, explore the rich variety of pathways available to women from different parts of the world, examine routes these women have taken and looks at what assistance they have had and whether this assistance has helped or hindered their journeys along the way. It draws on Pathways’ impressive range of audio visual material to help engage learners’ minds and help them reassess what they might have heard from media sources about development issues and to direct them to develop their own thinking and make up their own minds on issues. This material includes the *Real World* films and also an archive of photographs from across the

▲ Screen capture from the Pathways Learning Platform, *Matters of the Earth*.

“We believe influencing students is an important opportunity for future change as in a learning environment the new generation of thinkers are more open to hearing different points of view.”

Pathways’ regions including photographs taken by domestic workers within the Pathways ‘Organising Domestic Workers’ project in Brazil. The images really help students to get in touch with the lives

of real women, especially as these photographs were taken by the women themselves so they captured images which were significant to them. As well as creating critical consciousness for the domestic workers who engaged in the project in the first place, exposure to the images develops a

“The images really help students to get in touch with the lives of real women, especially as these photographs were taken by the women themselves so they captured images which were significant to them.”

new consciousness for the students as they consume what the women have produced.

Andrea Cornwall, Pathways' Director has said, 'We believe that it is essential, if we are to support women in empowering themselves, that we keep developing our understanding and knowledge of the journeys taken by women and not just reflect on the destination arrived. Through this learning platform women's pathways of

change have been made visible and we offer these materials in the hope that others will use and build on the knowledge within, to inspire a radical shift in policy and practice'.

Within the platform there are four modules exploring: Empowerment and Women's Work; Politics, Equality and Voice; Women, Representation and Sexuality; and Understanding and Evolving Empowerment, drawing on materials from each of the themes of the Pathways' work.

Modules contain case studies from ten countries, a wide selection of engaging resources – including films, photo galleries, info graphics, timelines, text resources, interactive comics and a range of flexible activities that vary in length of time, learning styles and skills. The Platform has been designed with usability and accessibility in mind. It can be used in lessons or workshops, by groups or independently outside of the learning environment on a range of devices.

All resources can be downloaded and then used without Internet connection and every resource and activity is also included in vibrant specially designed workbooks. These features allow users complete flexibility in how they choose to teach and engage with the learning materials within this platform. A lesson planning document and 'How to Use' instructional film is included to enhance understanding and provide further support to educators and learners. The website is filtered to be age and content appropriate. Non-school

age learners, community groups, women's organisations, those facilitating workshops and those studying gender related undergraduate programmes can access resources under the 'other groups' category. The learning platform offers flexible learning materials for others to use and build on to inspire a radical shift in policy and practice.

The learning platform was launched to coincide with International Women's Day 2014. It had already been piloted in countries including Vietnam, Thailand and Tanzania and was picked up almost immediately on its launch by a school in the Dominican Republic.

The Widening Participation programme at the University of Sussex has now provided additional funding to help develop and expand the Platform and Natalie has provided training and introduction sessions to a number of schools within Sussex in the UK.

The learning platform has enabled our research to reach a wider, important, educational audience and the feedback received from schools is that it is opening students' eyes to wider themes and issues on gender equality. Students have said that they enjoy using more thought-provoking and real life experiences in their lesson plans. There is a risk that we can't control how the material is adapted or used, but this risk is mitigated by providing suggested lesson plans. However, it is also outweighed by the opportunity of at least entering these spaces and attempting to give future generations new perspectives on women's rights and gender relations.

## 4 Conclusion

Relationships are an important aspect of our stories of change – building relationships of trust between partners; developing new relationships with professionals outside of development; and the existing relationships our partners are able to draw on within the wider development sector to share our research. We stress the importance of relationships in our work on women's empowerment. Efforts to promote positive change in women's lives won't work if implementers approach women as one group – separate from the relationships and interconnections of their lives.

These interconnections are key in terms of influencing. Using both the invited spaces of development such as Forum 2012 in The Hague, UN meetings in Geneva and Vienna, the AWID Forum in Istanbul, and the Commission on the Status of Women meetings in New York, as well as the informal spaces of serendipitous meetings and informal networking to challenge and provoke questions of policy.

Pathways of Women's Empowerment recognises the fundamental importance of women's organising to achieving positive change. Our research findings have underlined this and within the GPS programme we have sought to strengthen our links and alliances with women's movements. Moving forward, we hope to

continue to support these groups in their work.

Ambition has been a learning for Pathways in two ways. Firstly, we have been guilty of being overly ambitious in terms of workload and projects which we took on, which led to many members becoming over-committed and self-exploiting. We were also, however, accused of being overly ambitious in terms of the audience we wanted to reach when we said 'the general public'. We have, to some extent, been proved right with the 30% film and this was down to a whole range of factors, but the relationship with creative professionals was key.

Changing attitudes and structures of constraint, and contesting entrenched stereotypes are extremely challenging and long-term tasks but by representing alternative more positive ways of being and demonstrating more equitable approaches, such as the Egyptian cash conditional cash transfers project and the Chapeu de Palha scheme, we hope we can attempt to positively influence this process. Pathways aims to leave a legacy of images and films which present women's lives in a more realistic and positive light as well as revealing the complexity of their lives and challenging development stereotypes. We also hope to continue to engage within policy spaces to deliver the messages and findings from the programme and also to the media through blogs and articles.

“Pathways aims to leave a legacy of images and films which present women's lives in a more realistic and positive light as well as revealing the complexity of their lives and challenging development stereotypes.”

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